

U.S. open to Russia-Iran deal

MILDENHALL MILITARY BASE (AFP) — The United States said Wednesday it would not oppose Russia's sale of nuclear reactors to Iran if Tehran agreed to get rid of the spent fuel. The compromise is "something that we would possibly consider but which we are not negotiating," a senior administration official told reporters here as Secretary of State Warren Christopher returned from a Mideast tour. "A lot of people brought up the idea in and outside our government," he said but he added: "We are in the primary stages." Russia announced in February it had signed a \$1 billion agreement with Tehran to build a nuclear reactor at Bushehr on the Gulf despite U.S. objections that the facility could be used by Iran to develop a nuclear arsenal. President Bill Clinton announced Tuesday he would bar U.S. companies from developing Iran's oil and gas reserves including oil giant Conoco which was forced to scrap a \$1-billion contract with Tehran (see page 12). The official said the ban on oil exploration provided leverage to force Tehran to offer guarantees it will not use the Russian technology for military purposes. "We are in a better position to ask for similar steps," he said.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جولان تايمز يومية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية. الراي.

Islamic leaders sign agreements

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The leaders of nine Islamic nations signed a host of economic and cultural agreements Wednesday in a bid to increase trade and improve relations in the troubled region. The measures call for reducing trade tariffs, making it easier for businessmen to get visas, improving air and sea links and establishing joint cultural and science institutes. The measures were seen as the initial steps toward strengthening regional trade and leaders acknowledged that many barriers remain. "Tillings are moving slowly because of the tremendous work in front of us," Iran's President Hashemi Rafsanjani told a news conference at the conclusion of the two-day summit of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO). "But this is an initial step and certainly it can be implemented." The member states are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Turkey, the 10th member of ECO, did not sign any of the agreements saying its emerging private sector would participate, but not the government. The leaders focused on economics and did not attempt to resolve the political turmoil and numerous conflicts that have slowed or halted development.

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King honours Indonesia envoy

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Wednesday conferred upon Indonesian Ambassador to Jordan Mohammad Hassan Adami Al Istiklal Medal of the First Order on the occasion of the end of his tour of duty in the Kingdom. The medal was presented to the ambassador by Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabariti at a luncheon he held in Mr. Adami's honour.

Menem's son killed

BUENOS AIRES (R) — Carlos Menem Jr. son of Argentine President Carlos Menem, died Wednesday in a helicopter crash, local television said. He was 25.

Shells slam into Galilee area

TEL AVIV (AP) — Several mortar rounds landed near the Israel-Lebanon border Wednesday, and one reportedly scored a direct hit on an army position, military sources and Israeli Radio said. Military sources said at least four shells, probably from long-range mortars fired by guerrillas in southern Lebanon, exploded in an open area straddling the border in the Galilee panhandle. But Israeli Radio said one of the shells landed inside an Israeli army position along the border causing slight damage, but no injuries. Settlements along the front went on alert and Israeli artillery fire was returned to the source of fire, the radio said.

Lebanese deputy among 36 charged

BEIRUT (AP) — A parliament member who triggered a political uproar in December was among 36 people charged Wednesday with illegal drug trafficking. Deputy Yahya Shamas and 30 followers were charged with "large-scale" drugs smuggling and trafficking, according to the indictment by the investigating magistrate, Saeed Mirza. Mr. Mirza dismissed charges against 11 other suspects for lack of evidence. In a separate case, businessman Naim Maalouf and four other people were charged with smuggling 100 kilograms cocaine from Colombia. In both cases, Mr. Mirza demanded imprisonment of the suspects for up to seven years at hard labour. They are all in custody pending trial.

Castro ready to do business with Israel

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Cuban President Fidel Castro declared himself eager to trade with Israel in an interview published in Wednesday's Davar newspaper. "Cuba wants to do business with Israel, even in the absence of diplomatic relations between the two countries," Mr. Castro told the trade union daily on his trip to Paris this week. Havana broke off ties with the Jewish state over the 1973 Middle East war and Israel has backed the United States economic sanctions against the communist regime. Nonetheless an Israeli chief rabbi met for the first time with Mr. Castro in Cuba in February 1994.

PNA slaps back tax demand on W. Bankers

BEIT SAHUR (AFP) — The people of a West Bank town who became a symbol of the fight against occupation by refusing to pay Israeli tax have received demands for six year's arrears from the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). The angry folk of Beit Sahur, near Bethlehem, have appealed to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat by letter to be exempted. Israeli security troops into the town who made arrests and seized goods in lieu of taxes during the intifada which erupted in December 1987 and officially came to an end with the launch of autonomy in May 1994.

Prince Hassan, Peres hold talks with Kohl, senior EU officials

German chancellor affirms interest in helping peacebuilding in Mideast
Talks cover financing for water projects

BONN (Agencies) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres on Wednesday held talks with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl on the implementation of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty. Prince Hassan and Mr. Peres told a press conference after the meeting that the European Commission has taken the first steps toward helping build \$400 million dam projects that would send water from the Jordan and Yarmouk Rivers to Jordan. The two men asked for European assistance for the projects in meetings with Chancellor Kohl and Manuel Marin, a European Commission official in charge of relations with the Middle East. Mr. Peres said the European Commission is going to propose that the 16-nation European Union spend \$40 million to conduct a feasibility study.

Prince Hassan said the feasibility study may be finished before June. Crown Prince Hassan, in his talks with Assistant Euro-

pean Commissioner Marin, discussed several issues of concern to the EU and Jordan. Prince Hassan briefed Mr. Marin on Jordan's views on a European role in rebuilding and developing the Middle East region in accordance with the new realities resulting from the peace process. Prince Hassan reiterated proposals he made during meetings with EU officials in Brussels last November on concepts on partnership relations between Europe as a single economic and political bloc and the countries of the Mediterranean as one development region seeking to achieve stability and balance and consequently development and reconstruction. Prince Hassan referred to the role of the EU in supporting and financing some projects in the wake of the peace process, namely water and irrigation projects and those related to developing the Jordan Rift Valley. Mr. Marin stressed the EU's keenness to continue its support of the region and of peace efforts, and referred to the special relations between

the EU and Jordan. The meeting was attended by Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf, who is accompanying the Crown Prince on the visit. Later in the day the Crown Prince was received by Chancellor Kohl, who stressed Germany's appreciation of the Jordanian role in peace-making in the region and expressed Germany's support of the Kingdom in the coming era. Mr. Peres and Mr. Marin joined the meeting later along with German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel. Discussion at the expanded meeting focused on the latest developments in the peace process and efforts exerted to define the economic and political relations among the Middle Eastern countries. The Crown Prince briefed the meeting on the ideas and proposals which will be presented at the Amman economic summit, which will be held in October, and stressed Jordan's keenness to bring it to success. Chancellor Kohl hosted a lunch in honour of the Crown

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Clinton sees chance for durable peace after Christopher's trip

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — President Bill Clinton said on Wednesday he now sees a real opportunity to secure a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. "I believe there is now a real opportunity to secure a durable resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict," Mr. Clinton said at a joint news conference after White House talks with King Hassan of Morocco. "We must accelerate the momentum for peace in the Middle East," he said. The comment highlighted an expanded U.S. role in the peace process under a plan for negotiations worked out during a Middle East trip by Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

King Hassan echoed the president's sentiments and lauded progress towards peace. "This newborn peace

appears to be threatened by dangers because it's not a full-fledged peace," he said. "For peace to be achieved, the pace for negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis needs to be accelerated." Mr. Clinton met with King Hassan as Mr. Christopher returned with the agreement between Israel and Syria to start talking again early next week in Washington to work out an agreement on the future of the strategic Golan Heights. On a sunny, spring-like day King Hassan was welcomed to the White House with a 21-gun salute. Mr. Clinton called him "a good friend of America and one of the Islamic World's most respected leaders." King Hassan praised Clinton's "relentless efforts" for Middle East peace. The administration's new

strategy places Dennis Ross, a former academic who worked on Middle East diplomacy for President George Bush as well as Mr. Clinton, in the midst of tough bargaining between Israel and Syria. Mr. Ross also is taking over at least some of Secretary of State Warren Christopher's shuttling duties. He will go to the region in about two weeks to set the stage for senior Israeli and Syrian military commanders to join the Washington talks. What has not changed is the desire for Israel and Syria to bargain in secret, without the participants facing questions from reporters on what they are saying to each other and how they may be doing. Even the exact day they will begin is not being announced. Under an agreement Mr.

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Israel, PLO draft election deal

CAIRO (Agencies) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israeli negotiators began drafting a joint accord on elections to a Palestinian self-rule council here Wednesday but they skirted key points of dispute. "We have entered into writing a joint draft for the elections but there are still issues of substance that have not been tackled," the head of the PLO delegation, Saeb Erekat, said at the end of a two-day meeting in Cairo. "We are working now on chapters concerning the structure of the council," his Israeli counterpart, Yoel Singer said. He added that specific powers had not been discussed. Both sides said they reached agreement on providing the council with legislative powers, but the size of the council was still undecided. The Palestinians have proposed a 100-member legislative body while Israel has previously called for a smaller, solely executive council. The negotiators wound up discussions hours before PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat was expected to face pressure to halt the negotiations with Israel during a meeting with

nian council by last July. About this week's talks, Dr. Erekat said: "I don't have anything to tell you in terms of agreement. We have no signed agreements." He said the pact creating Palestinian autonomous zones in the Gaza Strip and Jericho would fall apart unless agreement on elections was reached before the July 1 deadline. "It is not a threat ... it is the fact," he added. The Tunis meeting scheduled to start late Wednesday involved leaders in Mr. Arafat's Fatah faction. A separate meeting of the PLO Executive Committee was scheduled Saturday. The sessions will be the first for the entire PLO leadership since Mr. Arafat moved to Gaza last July. The Cairo talks also touched on logistical aspects of the elections. "We need to start a door-to-door canvass to prepare a voters' list," Dr. Erekat said. He added that a list provided by the Israelis of one million Palestinians had almost "50 per cent errors." "We will do everything we can to allow the Palestinians

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German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (centre) with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in Bonn on Wednesday (AFP photo)

Major ends visit reiterating British support for Jordan

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — British Prime Minister John Major left Jordan on Wednesday after paying tribute to Jordan's commitment to peace and reaffirming his country's continued support for the Kingdom. Mr. Major, who held talks with His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan shortly after his arrival Tuesday evening, also reiterated London's backing for Jordan's quest for debt relief. Mr. Major, who was accompanied by Trade Minister Richard Needham, was seen off by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and senior officials. During a meeting early Wednesday with Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Mr. Major said, "I took the opportunity... to stress the very strong support that we feel in Britain for the role King Hussein has played in the Middle East peace process." The British prime minister, speaking to reporters at the

Prime Ministry, described the Oct. 26 Jordan-Israel peace treaty as "imaginative" and said: "We believe it is right for Jordan and... for the Middle East as a whole, so we firmly support it." On how he saw where Britain could help Jordan, the prime minister said: "I think there are practical steps, and the first practical one is so far the debt forgiveness." London wrote off \$75 million in Jordan's official debts to the British government late last year. Jordan has appealed to Britain's partners in the 15-member European Union (EU) who are also members of the Paris Club of creditor governments for similar gestures. Further British assistance was believed to be one of the topics discussed during Mr. Major's visit. It was not immediately known whether any definite commitments were made. However, Mr. Major appeared to throw his country's weight behind Jordan's plans to economic development through the private sector. He pointed out that it was

in this spirit that he brought along "the most high-power trade delegation that ever left the U.K." That was a reference to the chief executives of several British giants who accompanied him on his visit to Israel, the Palestinian self-rule territories and Jordan. The British prime minister also expressed hope "to see an increase in trade and also an increase of investment from abroad into the Jordan economy." Mr. Major, whose delegation included Trade Minister Richard Needham, said his talks with Sharif Zeid focused on a "wide range of bilateral matters, economic matters and trade matters..." British exports to Jordan during 1994 were worth \$114 million (about JD 125 million) while the Kingdom's exports to Britain — mostly clothes and agricultural produce — amounted to \$24.1 million (about JD 26 million). Before his meeting with Sharif Zeid, Mr. Major announced a donation of

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Beilin briefs Kabariti

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin arrived in Amman Wednesday evening and met with Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti to brief him on the outcome of talks U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Prime Minister John Major held in Israel this week.

Informed sources said Mr. Beilin also briefed Mr. Kabariti on the progress achieved on the Syrian-Israeli track of the peace process during Mr. Christopher's tour of the region. Mr. Christopher announced in Damascus Tuesday that Syria and Israel will resume their direct talks on the Golan Heights in a few days with the participation of U.S. officials.

Jordanian officials Wednesday welcomed the resumption of the Israeli-Syrian talks which were cut in December last year.

Mr. Kabariti expressed "comfort" with the outcome of Mr. Christopher's talks in the region, especially "the limited breakthrough" that was achieved on the Syrian-Israeli track.

Mr. Christopher on Wednesday ended his 13th tour of the area after holding talks with Jordanian, Palestinian, Syrian, Saudi and Israeli officials.

Mr. Kabariti said earlier he hoped that the Syrian-Israeli talks would achieve progress leading to an Israeli withdrawal from Syrian and Lebanese occupied territories to the borders of pre-June 4, 1967.

Informed sources told the Jordan Times that Mr. Kabariti stressed to Mr. Beilin the importance of the implementation of the provisions of the Oslo accord in the transitional period.

Questions unanswered yet on road accident

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

ZARQA — Controversy still surrounds the cause of Monday's road accident in which seven people were killed and 27 others injured, five of them critically. Initial reports suggested that speeding and wrong overtaking by the driver of a minibus that carried students were the reason behind the accident. Eyewitnesses and survivors said that the driver, who was killed instantly in the collision, was one of the safest drivers working on the Jerash-Zarqa route and he was not speeding when the accident took place. The theory, advanced by some relatives of the victims immediately following the collision, that the driver had had a heart attack behind the wheel, was discounted by hospital sources yesterday. The most senior traffic police official, brigadier General Ibrahim Sarairoh, assistant to the director of the police department, said the investigation was still continuing and its results would be presented to the court as soon as it was completed. "The report we received from the team of experts who investigated the accident indicated that the bus which was going on a curve down the hill passed the centre lane which means that the driver was speeding and lost control of his vehicle," Brig. Gen. Sarairoh said. He told the Jordan Times that a military truck that was coming from the opposite direction was carrying a heavy load and driving on the right side of the road. "It is not possible that the

truck was speeding because he was carrying 15 tonnes of goods and coming up the hill," the police official added. Meanwhile, the students who survived the crash insisted that the driver was not speeding or driving on the opposite lane as initial police reports suggested. "We always urged him (driver) to speed up because he was too slow, but he always told us that he preferred to be careful for their sake and for the sake of his wife and children," said one survivor who was still recovering at the orthopaedic section of Zarqa government hospital. Ziad Mohammad Hassan, 19, an accounting student at the Jerash Private University, said that he did not recall any moment of the accident; but he knows one fact, the bus driver was careful. "I was sitting at the last seat in the bus discussing a book with a friend of mine, the next thing I know is that I woke up in the hospital," Mr. Hassan told the Jordan Times. He said that the driver, Hamdan Qiam, was the safest driver of the other three drivers that worked on the Jerash-Zarqa route. The accident occurred near Muthalath 'Ein Khileh near the town of Biran. Ma'moun Mugirah, director of the Zarqa government hospital where seven people were declared dead on arrival, said that the scene at the hospital following the Biran accident was very tragic as families were trying to identify

Sharif Zeid and Sedki chair Cairo talks today

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Jordanian-Egyptian Higher Committee meets in Cairo today for the second time since July 1990 to discuss economic cooperation between the two countries under the chairmanship of Prime Ministers Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and Atef Sedki. Sharif Zeid is scheduled to travel to the Egyptian capital early today to attend the meeting, which will discuss draft agreements reached by a preliminary committee, the Jordan News Agency, Petra said. It said the agreements covered political relations and cooperation in tourism, transport, labour, energy and customs procedures and duties. Minister of Trade and Industry Ali Abul Ragheb left for Cairo Wednesday afternoon. Sharif Zeid will head the Jordanian delegation to the meetings. The delegation will include Mr. Abul Ragheb and the ministers of the various sectors of cooperation envisaged in the draft agreements. The Egyptian side will group their counterparts. The joint committee met last in Amman on May 5 and 6 and cleared up some of the issues that were pending as a result in the hiatus in meetings since July 28, 1990, when it convened its last session before Egyptian-Jordanian ties were strained as a result of conflicting approaches to the Gulf crisis triggered by the Aug. 2, 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Definite details were not immediately available of the

draft agreements to be presented to the two-day Cairo meeting, the 12th session of the committee which was set up in 1985. But officials say that both sides have shown keen interest in developing close cooperation after the rift in relations was healed. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak visited Aqaba in January in his first trip to Jordan since 1990 sealing reconciliation. The volume of trade between the two countries fell to \$48 million in fiscal 1993-1994, from \$51 million in 1992-94. The Jordanian export component of the trade was less than \$6 million. Final Jordanian figures for trade with Egypt in 1994 are not available, but preliminary figures indicate a slight increase over the 1993 figure. In addition to political issues such as the Middle East peace process and regional security, trade and exchange of expertise, streamlining Jordanian-Egyptian travel, joint tourism and transport projects are expected to top the committee's discussions. Also expected to be reviewed are plans of a joint holding company and the linkage of the national power grids of the two countries. Among the issues to be discussed by the joint committee are also issues related to Egyptian workers in Jordan and Jordanian students in Egypt. While in Cairo, Mr. Abul Ragheb will also attend a meeting of the Arab Social and Economic Council on Friday. Commercial exchanges and economic cooperation among Arab coun-

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Iran-U.S. trade flourishes despite public cold war

By Anwar Faruqi
The Associated Press

NICOSIA — Iran calls the United States "the great Satan." Washington brands Iran a "rogue state." But a look at the billions of dollars of trade between the two points a different picture.

The United States has emerged as one of Iran's largest trading partners, with American companies buying nearly one-quarter of its oil, despite U.S. trade restrictions dating back to the 1979 Islamic revolution when militants held U.S. embassy personnel hostage for 444 days.

American businesses may not import directly from Iran. But by going through foreign subsidiaries, American businesses have been able to maintain lively trade with the Islamic republic of 60 million people.

According to a U.S. Commerce Department report, U.S. firms exported \$616 million in goods to Iran in 1993 and received "zero" imports.

U.S. Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, however, calls the trade ban a "myth." He says oil companies are importing \$3.5 billion to \$4 billion worth of Iranian oil into the United States every year.

Items exported to Iran included airplane engines and replacement parts needed to maintain factories and other infrastructure

that was overwhelmingly U.S.-built before 1979.

But since exports benefit American companies, they have not received anything like the attention paid to the \$1 billion development deal Iran announced last week with Conoco Inc., a Houston-based oil giant.

Iran predicted the pact to develop two offshore oil fields in the southern Gulf would generate revenues of \$12.5 billion in oil exports and \$250 million in natural gas exports.

It was the first energy contract involving Iran and the United States in 16 years — and even though it was done through Conoco's Dutch affiliate, it set off enormous political fireworks in Washington.

On Tuesday, President Bill Clinton announced he will block the Conoco deal with a presidential order barring U.S. citizens or companies from signing contracts to finance, supervise or manage oil development projects in Iran.

"We need to send a clear and unequivocal message to Iran: There cannot be normal relations until Iran's unacceptable behavior changes," said White House Press Secretary Mike McCurry.

But Gary Sick, the national security adviser under President Jimmy Carter, believes Iran made the deal in order to send a message to Washington.

"By choosing an American company, Tehran is in

fact sending a signal that it's prepared to deal with the United States on a businesslike basis," he said.

There is no doubt Iran is in dire need of foreign funds. Its debt is estimated at up to \$30 billion, and there has been increasing public unrest over austerity measures.

But everywhere Iran has turned, the United States has tried to block the deal.

Washington opposed World Bank loans to Tehran and urged Europe and Japan to do the same. Germany is Tehran's biggest trading partner. Japan, Italy, Britain and France are its other main suppliers and clients.

Under U.S. pressure, Japan announced last month that it was reconsidering a \$450 million loan to Iran to build a hydroelectric power plant.

Tehran had hoped the Japanese loan would kick-start other foreign lending, on hold since last year when Iran defaulted on debt repayments and was forced to reschedule \$8 billion in loans.

Despite growing business ties between Tehran and Washington, the gloves remain off on political and diplomatic fronts.

The United States accuses Tehran of being one of the world's main sponsors of "international terrorism" and of developing weapons of mass destruction.

Mubarak: NPT must include Israel

TOKYO (Agencies) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak reiterated his country's stance on Wednesday of refusing to back an indefinite extension of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) unless Israel agrees to sign the pact.

Mr. Mubarak, in a meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama, said all countries should join the treaty. He said he supported an indefinite extension if it applied without exception.

"Israel's refusal to join has caused a feeling of unfairness which is one reason promoting terrorism," Mr. Mubarak was quoted as saying by a Japanese Foreign Ministry official present at the meeting.

Mr. Mubarak said Egypt would not quit the NPT, which is due to be reviewed at a conference in New York next month.

Mr. Murayama replied that both governments should

persevere in their efforts to see that the NPT was effective.

Egypt has been resisting pressure from Western nations to agree to renew its adherence to the treaty because of Israel's failure to either commit itself to the pact or open its nuclear facilities to inspection.

Mr. Mubarak, accompanied by a large delegation including Foreign Minister Amr Musa, arrived in Tokyo on Monday for a four-day visit designed to boost economic ties.

As a step to encourage trade with Egypt, Japan agreed to partially resume providing private Japanese companies with trade insurance for their exports to and investments in Egypt.

International Trade and Industry Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto told Mr. Mubarak about the resumption at a meeting on Wednesday. Japan halted its trade in-

surance programme to Egypt after Cairo wrote off half of its debts under an agreement with Western creditors in 1991.

It no longer provides yen loans to Egypt for the same reason.

At a meeting earlier Wednesday with Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono, Mr. Mubarak said: "When the Middle East peace process is progressing, it is strange that Israel is not joining in the NPT."

Mr. Mubarak said in an interview with a Japanese daily published Tuesday that Egypt would extend its approval of the treaty for a fixed period of time but not indefinitely.

Israel, suspected of possessing nuclear weapons, has said it will not sign the treaty as long as Iran, Iraq and Libya continued to pose a threat.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Resignations reported in Shin Bet

TEL AVIV (AP) — Half the branch heads of Israel's Shin Bet security agency have resigned in protest against the appointment of a liberal as chief, Israel Television reported Tuesday. The new chief, a 44-year-old who can only be identified by his first initial "K," is an expert on right-wing extremism in Israel, suggesting a shift in the agency's traditional emphasis on Palestinians. He took office on March 1. Six of 12 branch heads of the agency known formally as the General Security Services have stepped down since or during the weeks leading up to K's appointment, the television said. A security source speaking on condition of anonymity confirmed five of the cases. He said that those who resigned maintained that "K" and his deputy, identified as "R," were not familiar enough with "fighting terrorism in the occupied territories." The television said that at least two of the agents were active in a 1984 scandal over the beating deaths of two Palestinian bus hijackers that forced a Shin Bet chief to resign. The report was the latest indicator of a new openness about an agency once considered so top secret that its very name was censored from reports.

Militant jumps from third floor

MINYA (AFP) — A militant was seriously hurt on Tuesday when he jumped from a third-floor balcony to escape arrest, police said. Ramadan Mohammad Abdul Wahab, 27, believed to be one of the leaders of the outlawed, armed group the Gamaa Al Islamiya in Minya, was rushed to hospital. Explosives and a pistol were found in his apartment, police said. They added he had been giving refuge to militants wanted by police. Meanwhile, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood was arrested in Minya, 250 kilometres south of Cairo, accused of "belonging to an illegal organisation and having leaflets calling for the government to be toppled." And in Gairo the trial of nine militants accused of murdering two policemen guarding a railway line in the north of the capital in 1993 was opened and adjourned Tuesday.

Iranians celebrate festival of fire

TEHRAN (AFP) — Firemen and security forces were on standby Tuesday for Iran's annual "festival of fire" as three members of one family were injured when a homemade explosive device went off. Iranian television said the device had been made for Tuesday's festival and the blast had been so strong that it blew out the windows in about 30 nearby houses. Special police units and plain-clothed militiamen arrested "dozens of youths" after sealing off Tehran's northern suburbs and carrying out vehicle checks, correspondents said. Some of those arrested had set off firecrackers despite warnings from the authorities not to do so. More than 3,500 police cars were in place around the capital for the festival, which is celebrated annually on the last Tuesday before the start of the Iranian new year on March 21. Iranian authorities have for years frowned on the festival which dates back thousands of years to the Zoroastrian period, and have warned families of the dangers of letting children play with firecrackers. During the festival people set off firecrackers and jump over fires to purify themselves of illness and chase away bad spirits ahead of the new year. Every year homemade and illegal crackers cause a large number of casualties, especially among children.

Iran's satellite ban to take effect in April

NICOSIA (AP) — Tehran's new law banning satellite dish antennas takes effect next month, Iranian radio reported Tuesday. Interior Minister Ali Mohammad Besharati was quoted as saying he expects owners to dismantle their dishes before the law comes into force in the first week of April. The ban, passed by parliament last month, is aimed at keeping out Western TV shows which are seen as polluting Iran's Islamic character. However, some legislators have warned that enforcement will be problematic given the ease of concealing the latest models, which can be less than one metre diameter. Rooftop dishes have proliferated in Iran, with an estimated 400 erected each day in the capital last year.

Hotel InterContinental Jordan Turns 32!!

TODAY, the Hotel InterContinental Jordan celebrates its 32nd anniversary. Founded in 1963, the Hotel InterContinental Jordan was determined to grow, develop and maintain high standards of quality, hospitality, reliability and first-class service. The first five-star hotel to open in the Kingdom, Hotel InterContinental Jordan had the privilege of introducing the Jordanian people to facilities and comfort of international standards. The first opened with 110 guest rooms, increasing to 235 in 1973 and to 400 in 1982 and undergoing major renovations in 1987. There are also several hotel outlets, Okaz Coffee Shop, Bukhara Restaurant, Bahama Terrace, El Pasha Nightclub and the newly opened Mexican Restaurant Mama Juanita that add to the uniqueness of the Hotel InterContinental Jordan. Mr. Chawki Ayoub, General Manager of the Hotel InterContinental Jordan, said on the occasion of the hotel's 32nd anniversary "Throughout the years we have proven that it is possible to remain the leaders in upholding the highest standards of excellence. Our attention to the smallest detail has allowed the Hotel InterContinental Jordan to be a member of the most selective and distinctive Hotel InterContinental Jordan to be a member of the most selective and distinctive hotels in the region." Mr. Ayoub also commented that he looks forward to the Hotel InterContinental Jordan's future as the hotel continues to meet the changing needs of its client.

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Air France to operate non smoking flights

Air France will operate its first exclusively non smoking Transatlantic flight, between Paris (Charles De Gaulle Airport) and New York (Kennedy Airport) on March 26th, 1995.
AF clients will have the choice between smoking and non smoking flights since three other flights link Paris to New York daily (Kennedy and Newark Airports).

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17:00 Les Raisons Laveurs
17:30 Mana Dos Eaux Vives
18:00 News in French
19:30 Road To Avonlea
19:45 Planete En Equilibre
20:30 The Blue Revolution
21:10 E.N.G.
22:00 News in English
22:20 Feature film
23:59 The Eve

PRAYER TIMES

06:25 Fair
06:42 (Summer) Doha
11:45 Dhuhr
15:09 'Asr
17:47 Maghreb
19:04 'Isha

CHURCHES

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Church of Nazareth Tel. 678691,
The Evangelical Light Church in
Amman Tel. 811298

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Depart-
ment of Meteorology
Temperatures are expected to
drop slightly and humidity to rise.
Skies will be partly cloudy and
winds northwesterly moderate to
active with a chance of scattered
showers. In Aqaba, winds will be
northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp
Amman 10/19
Aqaba 13/24
Dahab 7/21
Jordan Valley 13/23
Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 22 Aqaba 28 Humidiv

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Ghaleb Zuwaydah 734011
Dr. Walid Al Masri 675485
Dr. Hisham Kan'an 790286
Dr. Jamal Jharah 847351
Fire pharmacy 691912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yaoush pharmacy 644945
Shmashan pharmacy 637664
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Najih pharmacy 847632

IRRID:
Dr. Ali Al Omari 272032
Al Quds pharmacy (-)
ZARQA:
Dr. Ahmad Al Tariq 908060
Khalifeh pharmacy 965417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 611111
Civil Defence Emergency 630421
Rescue 630421
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 608801
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Complaints Information 787111
Director's assistance 121
Overseas Calls 110230
Central Amman Telephone 623181
Abdullah Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 771111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680101
Jordan Electricity Authority 816165
Electric Power 636381
Company 18-53201
RJ Flight Information 18-53201
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 18-53201

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussain Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn. 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642862
Malha, J. Amman 636141
Falestine, Shmashan 664171/4
Shmashan Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/71
Al-Abli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muasher 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 891611/15
Army, Shmashan 661277/9
Queen Alia Hospital 642240/50
Amal Hospital 841515
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)843323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)845641
J. Amn. (09)845641
The Sina Hospital (09)845641
Al Hikm Modern Hospital (09)845641
IBRID:
Princess Banaa Hospital (02)272225
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272225
J. Amn. Nucleus Hospital (02)272100
AOABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by
Royal Jordanian (RJ) information
department at the Queen Alia
International Airport Tel. (01)833241.
5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
(Terminal 1)
04:00 Doha (QF)
05:00 Aden (RJ)
05:15 Cairo (RJ)
05:30 Amman (RJ)
05:45 Beirut (RJ)
06:00 London (RJ)
06:15 Athens (RJ)
06:30 Rome (RJ)
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Other Flights (Terminal 2)

10:00 Muscat, Doha (GF)
12:30 Riyadh (SV)
12:40 Sharjah (AH)
14:15 Doha (EK)
16:15 Paris, Damascus (AF)
20:05 Cairo (MS)
20:20 Beirut (ME)
22:55 Istanbul (TK)
01:10 Amsterdam (KL)

17:15 Doha (EK)

18:00 Damascus, Doha (O7)
21:00 Cairo (MS)
03:20 Amsterdam (KL)

HUJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:30 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:30 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.
Apple 700/800
Banana 600
Banana (Mukammal) 620
Cabbage 100/50
Carrot 160/80
Cauliflower 180/100
Cucumbers (large) 120/60
Cucumbers (small) 220/120
Eggplant 140/80
Green beans 120/60
Lemon 100/50
Marrow (large) 100/50
Marrow (small) 150/80
Onion (green) 230/120
Onion (dry) 300/250
Orange 450/250
Peach 500/400
Pepper (hot) 500/400
Pepper (sweet) 500/400
Potato 300/200
Spinach 150/60
String Beans 550/400
Tomato 200/100



Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday visited the NHF projects in Bassa and Iraq Al Amir. She also discussed the NHF plans to renovate 9-11 more buildings thus creating a small village that will preserve the architectural and handicrafts heritage of the region and would be linked to the archaeological site of Iraq Al Amir — enhancing its touristic appeal and increasing the benefits to the community. (Photo by George Crystal)

Queen visits NHF projects at Bassa, Iraq Al Amir

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday visited the two quality of Life Projects established by the Nurf Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) at Bassa village and at Iraq Al Amir in Wadi Seer, a local Court statement said. Queen Noor, officially opened the "Al Noor" Kindergarten at Bassa, built this year to serve the preschool children of the village. The kindergarten was established in 1994 with various sources of financial support including the Christian Children's Fund.

Queen Noor chatted with the children as she inspected the kindergarten's educational and recreational facilities. At Iraq Al Amir, Queen Noor was briefed on the Bassa/Iraq Al Amir Development Project at the central office located in a small renovated farmhouse.

Over the past decade, the Queen has been encouraging the development of high quality artisan centres in Jordan's ancient villages located near archaeological sites in order to promote Jordanian handicrafts and to integrate socio-economic development with tourism.

The NHF handicrafts centre at Iraq Al Amir is an example of her endeavours. The Queen toured the paper production and textile weaving centre located in another renovated farmhouse, which was set up in February 1993 with the aid of loans and a weaving expert from the government of China.

The Canadian embassy provided funds for faster and wider Indian looms. Queen Noor, with the help of Dr. Usama Khalidi, demonstrated the centre's production of handmade paper from local vegetable fiber.

She also discussed the NHF plans to renovate 9-11 more buildings thus creating a small village that will preserve the architectural and handicrafts heritage of the region and would be linked to the archaeological site of Iraq Al Amir — enhancing its touristic appeal and increasing the benefits to the community.

Queen Noor inspected the Dutch Cows Project, funded by Princess Irene of Greece's "World in Harmony Organisation." The project, as well as the other NHF small-scale agricultural projects such as medicinal herbs, not only generate income and jobs for rural families, but also improve their health by satisfying their nutritional needs.

Queen Noor ended her visit by distributing certificates to 60 men and women from Bassa and Iraq Al Amir who had participated in the local leadership training courses. The entire NHF Wadi Seer Project is a model for comprehensive, integrated community development, which combines the Quality of Life Project (agriculture, education, nutrition), Women in Development Project (medicinal herbs and small businesses), the Institute for Child Health and Development (health training), and the Jordanian Design and Trade Centre (small business development and cultural revival).

A minimum of 250 jobs will be created for women in the four projects. The Swiss government donated JD400,000 for two years beginning November 1994 to fund the NHF Quality of Life projects and activities.

The NHF Quality of Life Project was initiated in 1989 in cooperation with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Ministry of Health. The project aims to improve the overall quality of life of underprivileged rural and urban communities in Jordan by establishing labour-intensive and self-employment schemes thereby promoting the communities' self-reliance.

It is based on grassroots democratic community participation in the planning, management and evaluation of development schemes. By 1994, the Quality of Life Project was benefiting 2,000 families in 12 villages and 25,000 people living in those villages and in the neighbouring areas.

The project is recognised by WHO as a regional training model and the NHF plans to introduce it as a national model for socio-economic development in Jordan. The NHF until now has trained delegations from Iran, Syria, Egypt and Pakistan and will train delegations from Morocco, Yemen and Oman.

Queen Noor, accompanied by Mrs. Noor Izzeddin, was received at Bassa village by Governor of Amman Talaat Nawaiseh, the acting director of NHF, the Swiss Ambassador to Jordan and his wife, a representative from WHO, the director of the Wadi Seer district and other local officials. At Iraq Al Amir, the Queen was received by the Local Development Council, the Mother and Child Health Club and the employees of the Iraq Al Amir Development Project.

CDD observes its international day

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Civil Defence Department (CDD) Wednesday opened a two-day public exhibition to mark International Day of the Civil Defence at Al Hussein Sports City.

The exhibition, opened by CDD Director Lieutenant General Afif Ghoul, included an exhibition of equipment and vehicles used by the CDD.

Also, the exhibition, which was visited by kindergarten and elementary school students from different parts of the Kingdom included films and documentaries of the CDD achievements.

CDD officers explained safety procedures to students which could be applied in their schools and at home and performed first-aid demonstrations while explaining the various steps to the youngsters.

According to Major Mohammad Qoteishat, director of the exhibition, the aim of the display was to introduce people of all ages to the mission of the CDD, and to get to know the roles, duties and preparations that the CDD teams take on.

"We are trying to strengthen the comprehensive concept of the CDD among people, which means 'me and you and everyone else living in the society'," Maj. Qoteishat said.

He told the Jordan Times that the CDD started celebrating International Day of the Civil Defence Day in 1992 when international civil defence organisations designated March 1 of each year for its marking.

According to Maj. Qoteishat, the CDD started its services unofficially in 1948; then in 1959 the department was officially formed after a law was passed specifying the CDD's duties.

When the department was formally established it consisted of less than 100 staff. Today "we have more than 4,000 people working for the department," said Maj. Qoteishat.

The CDD was part of the Public Security Department until 1970, when they officially separated, Maj. Qoteishat said.

According to the major, people's response to the exhibitions was positive, and "we sensed their respect and appreciation for our services, and we appreciate the confidence people have in us."

Moreover, on the occasion of the CDD international day, Mohammad Hadid, president of the Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS) presented 100 first-aid kits, 500 blankets and five tents to the CDD in recognition to their distinguished efforts in human services.



Above, Civil Defence Department Director Lieutenant General Afif Ghoul shakes hands with a CDD officer while touring a display of department vehicles with other officials and guests. Below, CDD officer, Private First Class Bashir Momani explains classroom and home safety measures to kindergarten and elementary school students (Photos by Rana Hussein)



Classroom accident; 30 students hospitalised

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Thirty Al Mansoura School girls Wednesday were admitted to Al Nadim Hospital in Madaba suffering from gas inhalation, Civil Defence Department (CDD) reports said.

A CDD official said the accident occurred when a fifth grade student, carrying a small tube filled with an unknown liquid gas, accidentally dropped the tube in the classroom.

"The gas spread in the room, and all 30 students who were in the room panicked. Most of them fainted," the CDD official told the Jordan Times.

An official at Al Nadim Hospital said the students were discharged the same day after being examined.

"One or two students suffered the most, but it seemed that the rest of the girls were psychologically affected because of the panic that went on when the tube fell and broke," said the hospital official.

He added that the students, who spent less than an hour in the hospital, returned to school after receiving first-aid treatment.

A CDD official said that samples of the gas from the tube itself are being examined to determine what the contents were.

On Tuesday a 74-year-old man in Al Hashmish area of Amman died in hospital after suffering third degree burns, in a fire which engulfed his home, CDD and police reports said.

Minister, U.S. envoy inaugurate model family care centre in Salt

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Health Aref Batayneh and U.S. Ambassador to Jordan Wesley W. Egan Wednesday inaugurated a model Family Care Centre to provide high quality services in the fields of maternal and child health care and primary health care.

The Family Care Centre is the first such facility to be upgraded under a project initiated by the Ministry of Health and supported by a grant of \$7 million from the United States government, and embassy statement said.

The main objective of the project is to improve the quality of services provided to the public and to reduce the costs incurred by the government for providing these services, said the statement.

Besides offering high quality services to mothers and children, the Salt Family Care Centre will serve as a model for future similar centres throughout the country.

It will also offer training in health care management and techniques to physicians, nurses and midwives from other regions of the Kingdom.

Under an agreement with Brown University, a special training programme has begun at the University of Jordan in Amman and the Jordan University of Science and Technology in Irbid to train a new cadre of family physicians to fill these centres throughout the country, according to the embassy.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Balqa Governor Eid Qatameh and senior officials at the Ministry of Health and the United States embassy in Amman.

System engineering training course begins at specialised RSS centre

AMMAN (J.T.) — An advanced training course in the field of "System Engineering" Wednesday began at the Computer Technology Training and Industrial Studies Centre (CTTISC) of the Royal Scientific Society (RSS), according to the RSS. The course, which is to last 18 months, is held in cooperation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the statement said.

Opening the course, RSS President Said Alloush said the society pays special attention to training in its activities as one of the major responsibilities of development and scientific and technological progress.

Dr. Alloush reviewed RSS activities in the fields of research and scientific developments, technical consultations and services, and training which are carried out by its centres in the field of environment, building, electronics, renewable energy, mechanical design, and industrial chemistry.

He also thanked the Japanese government, represented by JICA, for its support of RSS and hoped that this course will attain its objectives.

Japanese Minister-Councillor Mr. Hajime Tanaka praised the distinguished cooperation between Jordan and Japan in several fields hoping that it will contribute to the entrenchment of progress and stability in the region.

CTTISC Director Saqr Abdul Rahim said that this course aims at providing the participants with the expertise needed to develop information systems according to internationally accepted bases in addition to training in system performance measurement.

The participants will be introduced to the concepts of information systems engineering and developing technical skills of system analysts in the field of systems design, performance measurement and reliability using up-to-date technological methods.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

- ★ Film entitled "Stico" at Instituto Cervantes (The Spanish Cultural Centre) on Thursday at 4:30 p.m.
- ★ Film entitled "High School Confidential" at the American Center on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

PLAY

- ★ Play (in Arabic) entitled "Rambo, the Flowers and the Pain" at Darat Al Funun on Friday at 4:00 p.m.

FIELD TRIP

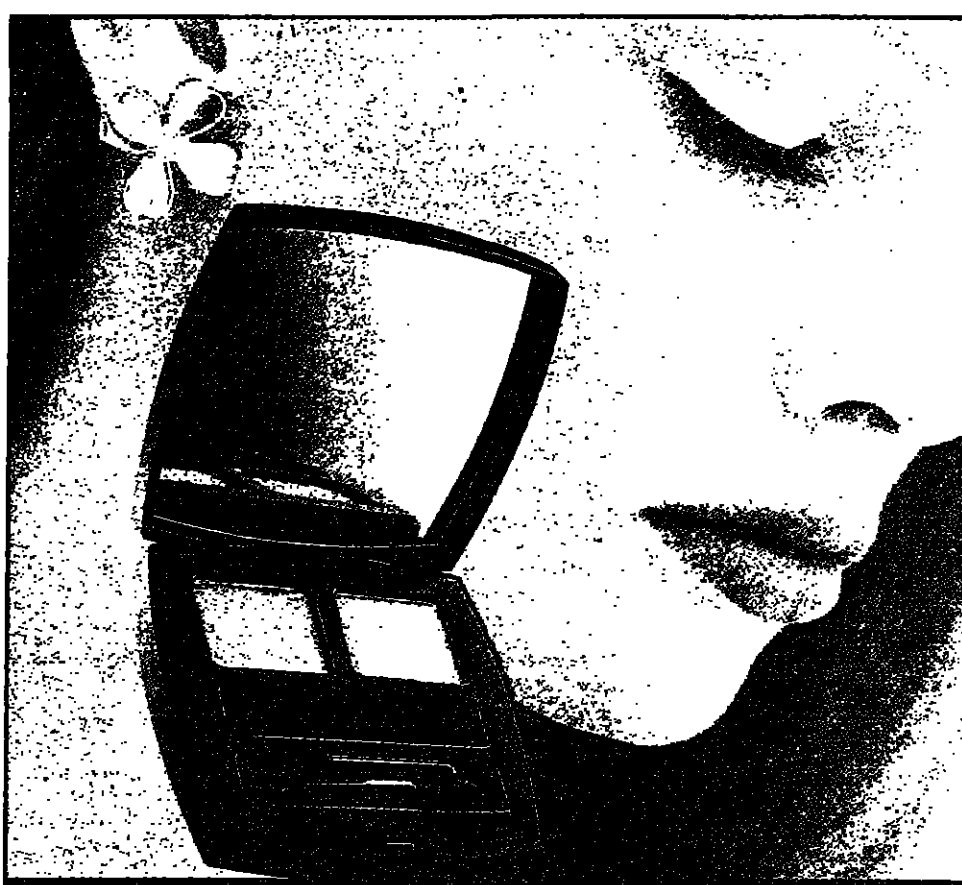
- ★ Field trip, organised by the Friends of Archaeology (FoA) Society, to Lot's Cave Monastery, Deir Ain Abata, Ancient Byzantine Zoor/Segour, and Safi on Friday. Departure will be in private cars from FoA Center at 8:00 p.m.

CLASSICAL MUSIC RECITAL

- ★ Classical music recital by the Jordanian Armed Forces Orchestra on Thursday at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Exhibition of paintings by several artists entitled "Faces" at the Balqa Art Gallery, Fuheis.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by Nazli Irtemelcik at Alia Art Gallery.
- ★ Exhibition of art by Rula Shukairy at the French Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by Iraqi artist Hana Mahallah at Ab'ad Art Gallery.
- ★ Three exhibitions of plastic art by George Edlib, Abdullah Kamaleh, and Mohammad Majali at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition by Syrian artist Marwan Qasab Bashi at Darat Al Funun. Also showing a permanent exhibition of contemporary Arab artists.



CHANEL

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ON MARCH 20TH
- BAYADER
TEL. 818 173
ON MARCH 21ST

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Yeltsin names TV journalist as new press aide

Russian politics shaken up by new pro-Yeltsin party

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Russian politics have been shaken up by the formation of a new party backing President Boris Yeltsin and growing speculation that upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections could be postponed.

The Stability Party registered officially this week as a new centrist group in the State Duma (lower house of parliament), poaching its 36 deputies from across the political spectrum and disrupting the inter-party balance of power.

One of the party's main backers, banker Oleg Boiko, said this week that the power behind the party was the country's "seven or eight" major banks, which he said wanted no part of the instability which would come with elections.

"It is clear that the result will be a worse parliament and a worse president," he said in a long interview in the newspaper Kommersant Tuesday under a headline saying: "The big banks do not need the elections."

Parliamentary elections are scheduled in December and presidential elections in June 1996. But there has been growing speculation that they may be postponed because of the current climate of lawlessness in Russia.

The speculation has been fuelled by Mr. Yeltsin's sharp decline in popularity since the beginning of the year, which the new party aims to

reverse. One poll at the end of February showed that only seven per cent of Russians had confidence in the president, against 71 per cent who did not.

"We need to maintain the current balance of political forces, which is not as bad as people think," Mr. Boiko said.

He added that the Chechenya conflict had unsettled all Russia's political parties, and that nearly half the Duma's deputies were against the official lines of their leaders.

Mr. Boiko, who resigned last weekend as co-president of the reformist Russia's Choice Party, said the Stability Party stood for reinforcing central power, political stability, the avoidance of crises and "constructive politics."

The big loser from the defections was Russia's Choice, the largest party in the Duma. As well as Mr. Boiko, seven of its deputies went over to Stability, leaving it with 57 seats, party spokesman Oleg Bondarenko said.

He maintained that Russia's Choice was still clinging to its position as the largest single party in the 225-seat Duma, a shade ahead of Vladimir Shironovskiy's ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR).

Several LDPR members have also defected to Stability.

But it is impossible to make a formal count to deter-

mine whether the ultra-nationalists have in fact pulled ahead of the free marketeers in the Duma because of the constantly-shifting alliances typical of Russian politics.

Stability has been in the making since the beginning of the year, after Russia's Choice began attacking Mr. Yeltsin for the military's harshline aggression in crushing a secessionist rebellion in Chechenya.

On Saturday, Russia's Choice formally withdrew its backing from Mr. Yeltsin in next year's presidential election "because of the bloody events in Chechenya", Mr. Bondarenko said.

Stability, described by Mr. Bondarenko as "democratic with a centrist orientation", has its origins in a meeting called by Yeltsin aide Andre Logunov last month with potential defectors.

Soon afterwards, Russia's Choice warned that they were being bought with promises of government support.

Mr. Zhirnovskiy went further. He called the defectors "traitors" and demanded that the Duma investigate the circumstances of Stability's birth.

"Behind all that is the Kremlin which wants to penetrate into the Duma," he said in a newspaper interview Tuesday.

President Yeltsin named a top television journalist to be his chief press spokesman

Tuesday in a move to improve his image ahead of challenges at the ballot box.

Mr. Yeltsin signed a decree appointing 37-year-old Sergei Medvedev, a political adviser, as his appointed Moscow's ambassador to the Vatican.

Mr. Medvedev, who presents a political news programme called News Plus, hinted that his immediate task would be to try to keep Mr. Yeltsin more in tune with the outside world and the public more informed of Kremlin affairs.

"The estrangement of the presidential team from the press can fully be overcome," he told ITAR-TASS news agency.

He appeared to be referring to increasing press criticism that the 64-year-old Russian president at times seems out of touch with reality and is sometimes under the influence of political opportunists within his entourage.

The liberal press in particular has named Major-General Alexander Korzhakov, who heads Yeltsin's Kremlin Security Service, as one such adviser who has the ear of the president.

Mr. Yeltsin's appointment of Mr. Medvedev, a well-known figure to the public, and the removal of the combative Kostikov seemed clearly aimed at improving the president's image before parliamentary elections.



U.S. marines survivors in combat suits, attend the 50th anniversary of the battle for Iwo Jima Island (AFP photo) Barrett arrive at the Iwo Jima Airport to

U.S. vets put Iwo Jima ghosts to rest

IWO JIMA, Japan (AP) — Harvey Garner looked down and fell silent for a moment as his feet sank into the black sand of invasion beach. "This feels familiar," he said, tears welling in his eyes. "This feels very familiar."

From its eerie caverns to the crumbling gray pillboxes that dot the landscape, Iwo Jima is an island haunted by its bloody past.

But 50 years after Americans came here to find their own little hell on Earth, Garner and several hundred other veterans of the battle to win this secluded crag put some of those ghosts to rest.

"I don't feel bad about coming back here," said Garner, of Tampa, Florida, as he walked down the beach. Fifty years ago, he ran for his life up the same stretch of sand, with Japanese shooting at him from both sides.

"I thank God I made it. Many didn't," he said.

The veteran of the 5th Marine Division was among more than 800 American vets and their families who came back to Iwo Jima for a 50th anniversary memorial.

U.S. troops stormed ashore on Feb. 19, Tuesday's ceremony, the only official one planned by the military, commemorated the island's capture after weeks of bitter fighting.

A handful of Japanese survivors, along with 100 or so relatives of soldiers who fought here, including the son and widow of the Japanese commander on Iwo Jima, Tadachichi Kuriyashiki, also attended the ceremony.

The Japanese government, which has distanced itself

from 50th anniversary ceremonies, sent no cabinet-level officials, even though the Americans were represented by Navy Secretary John Dalton and Marine Commandant Gen. Carl E. Mundy, Jr.

Dozens of drab green trucks shuttled the veterans around the island to the sites of some of worst fighting. As

they looked out over the thick jungle brush, the veterans pointed to spots they remembered, or to the many plumes of steam from the island's volcanic depths.

Today, the island's only full-time inhabitants are a few hundred Japanese troops who man the airfield here.



Commandant of U.S. Marine Corps, General Carl Mundy Jr. (left) delivers a speech at the top of Mt. Suribachi during the commemorative ceremony for the 50th anniversary of the battle for Iwo Jima Island, some 1,250 kilometres (780 miles) south of Tokyo. Secretary of Navy John Dalton (2nd left) looks on (AFP photo)

Azerbaijan plunged into power struggle over fate of special forces

MOSCOW (AFP) — Azerbaijan plunged into a new power struggle Wednesday after the government ordered mutinous elite special forces to be dissolved and sent troops to surround their headquarters outside Baku.

Reports said the troops of the Interior Ministry Special Force, known as OPON, had defied an order to surrender their weapons issued Tuesday night by Interior Minister Ramil Usbov.

Interfax News Agency said OPON forces were holed up with their chief Rovshan Dzhabayev, the deputy interior minister, at OPON headquarters near Baku, the Azerbaijani capital on the Caspian Sea.

The agency, quoting government troops, said soldiers had moved into position around OPON headquarters overnight.

Mr. Usbov announced Tuesday that he had decided to disband OPON in the

wake of a mutiny by troops in two northwestern towns near the border with Armenia.

On Monday OPON troops seized several government buildings in Kazakh and Akstafa triggering clashes in which two people were killed and two injured, according to a toll which is still provisional.

The mutineers withdrew from the buildings Monday evening, an Azerbaijani diplomat in Moscow said Wednesday, adding that the situation in Baku remained calm.

On Tuesday night, Mr. Usbov went on television to announce the dissolution of OPON "over which the government has lost all control and who have joined up with criminal gangs."

OPON commanders said the dissolution order was "unlawful" and claimed they were victims of a "provocation" by the Interior Ministry which has accused OPON

troops of engaging in smuggling "strategic" raw materials, notably copper.

An Interior Ministry source said OPON troops had mutinied in protest at government efforts to stop their illegal activities.

OPON leaders meanwhile called for the resignations of Mr. Dzhabayev and of parliament speaker Rasul Guliyev and for a special session of parliament to be convened to discuss the row.

The latest spat in the volatile former Soviet republic seems like an exact replay of incidents last October when OPON forces staged a rebellion after being accused of involvement in the murders of three close aides of President Geidar Aliyev.

Two days later, the then Prime Minister Surat Guseynov seized on the unrest to try to unseat Mr. Aliyev in an abortive coup launched from his powerbase of Gandzha, 400 kilometres west of Baku.

Gingrich backs Hollywood

WASHINGTON (AP) — Movie moguls got some encouraging words from House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who told them the Republican-led Congress would protect them from international trade restrictions.

"The entertainment industry, broadly described, is one of the major job producers in the United States and one of the major earners of foreign exchange," Mr. Gingrich said after the 90-minute private breakfast meeting. "They have not been adequately represented by the United States government."

If Western European countries continue to erect barriers against the free flow of films, videos and other U.S. entertainment products, Mr. Gingrich said, "Congress could easily pass" legislation imposing reciprocal trade restrictions.

"We could pick the five most sensitive European exports and cite exactly the same reason (for protection) and pass a law which cuts off some of their most sensitive high technology, high growth areas," Mr. Gingrich said.

Cambodian rebels murder 30 villagers

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Khmer Rouge guerrillas reportedly abducted and killed 30 villagers in Cambodia's northwest Battambang province, the deputy governor said Wednesday.

Serey Kosol told AFP that a single villager who escaped reported to authorities that he and the 30 other men had been abducted at gunpoint as they were cutting thatch in a

forest in Battambang's Rattanak Mondul district Saturday.

The group were marched off in the direction of the guerrillas' Pailin headquarters and were then shot and killed, he quoted the man as saying.

The villager did not know why the guerrillas had killed the others, he said. There was no independent

confirmation of the killings.

Khmer Rouge guerrillas killed about 50 villagers who ventured into the forest in the Bavel district of Battambang last year.

Although the villagers had run into the guerrillas on previous occasions without incident, survivors of the massacre said the Khmer Rouge accused the group of spying for the government.

Mexico drops arrest warrants on rebel leaders; pulls back troops

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — The government said Tuesday it rescinded arrest warrants against Zapatista rebel leaders and ordered a removal of the army checkpoints to facilitate peace talks in the southern state of Chiapas.

The Interior Ministry said the army had been ordered to withdraw from "all posts" in the conflict zone in Chiapas, the scene of an insurrection by mainly indigenous guerrillas Jan. 1, 1994.

Arrest warrants issued Feb. 9 against five leaders of the Zapatista National Liberation Front (EZLN), including its masked leader Subcomandante Marcos, also have been rescinded, it said.

However, a ministry spokesman said the army would continue to engage in limited patrols of the area "only for the purpose of protecting military contingents" and to resupply and relieve troops.

The long-simmering insurgency in Chiapas has been a constant reminder of the potential for political instability in Mexico, and has helped to undermine confidence in the country.

A flare-up in tensions in December contributed to the collapse of peso, which sent the economy tumbling into its worst crisis since the debt crisis of 1982.

The rebels had made withdrawal of the military presence from the conflict zone a condition for resuming peace negotiations, which have been stalled since June, 1994.

A rebel-government meeting in January led nowhere and on Feb. 9 President Ernesto Zedillo sent troops

into the rebel stronghold in the Lacandona jungle and the rugged hills around it with orders to arrest the rebel leadership. They came up empty.

The government's latest measures fell short of the EZLN's demand that government troops withdraw to the positions they had held before Feb. 9.

Nevertheless, the Interior Ministry said the objective of the measures announced was "to foster an atmosphere adequate for the start of dialogue and negotiation."

The statement said the government wanted to encourage a return to normal of daily life in the zone, where thousands of Indian peasants have fled their communities.

To encourage people displaced by the conflict to return home "there will be no military checkpoints in the conflict zone," the Interior Ministry said.

Military contingents would be kept out of rural communities and settlements in the conflict zone and troops would be instructed to allow free movement of civilians, the Interior Ministry said.

In addition, the government said it was launching an aid programme for returning peasants, who would be provided with food, health care, and transportation.

The announcement was made following a meeting between Interior Minister Esteban Moctezuma and the National Intermediation Commission, which has acted as a mediator in the talks. Also at the meeting was a newly created legislative commission whose mandate

is to foster a peaceful solution to the crisis.

The government said the two commissions exchanged views on the bases for negotiations, including the locations, conditions and an agenda for the peace talks.

The commissions members agreed to return to Chiapas as soon as possible to "further the necessary arrangements for a prompt start of the dialogue and negotiation between the government and the EZLN," the Interior Ministry said.

Meanwhile Mexico's former president denied that he was sent into exile and claimed he could return home "at any moment," the New York Times reported in its Wednesday editions.

Carlos Salinas de Gortari telephoned the Times Tuesday and later met with a reporter at the official residence of the Mexican ambassador to the United Nations, Manuel Tello.

"This has been a difficult 90 days," said Mr. Salinas, whose six-year term as president ended Dec. 1. "A former president of Mexico has to adjust to a different way of life. You have so many duties and responsibilities that end sharply. And that's it."

He said he planned to spend the foreseeable future travelling to the United States and elsewhere and giving speeches. His wife and children, he said, were in Mexico City.

"Can I return to Mexico?" Salinas asked. "At any moment yes" then he added: "But I don't have plans now to do so."

Simpson attorneys sharpen attack on detective

LOS ANGELES (R) — O.J. Simpson's attorneys Tuesday sharpened their attack on a detective they accuse of framing the former football star, confronting him with allegations that he used racial slurs and once said all blacks should be killed.

Under blistering cross-examination by famed trial lawyer F. Lee Bailey, detective Mark Fuhrman, who had been accused of making the racist remarks to two women who recall meeting him in the mid-1980s.

Mr. Fuhrman squared off with Mr. Bailey for the second straight day at Simpson's double-murder trial and was subjected to tough, precise questioning aimed at opening up holes in his testimony and undermining his credibility.

Before Mr. Fuhrman took the witness stand Tuesday, Judge Lance Ito handed Simpson's attorneys a major victory by granting them permission to grill Mr. Fuhrman about new allegations that he once called a black Marine recruiting officer a "nigger" about ten years ago.

But gunnery sergeant Max Cordoba, the officer who Mr. Bailey cited, was quoted as telling the tabloid TV show A Current Affair that "I didn't at any time get the impression that he was a biased type person or either racist or anything."

The latest bombshell angered prosecutors but fit neatly with the defence team's central theory — that Mr. Fuhrman is an embittered white racist who may have planted a bloody glove to implicate Simpson in the murders of his ex-wife and her friend.

Simpson is black. Both of his alleged victims were white.

Simpson's defence lawyers have yet to present any proof to support their claims of a frame-up, and Mr. Fuhrman disclosed Tuesday that he plans to sue members of Simpson's legal team for "defaming" him.

Crucial to the defence strategy is a story told by real estate agent Kathleen Bell, who says Mr. Fuhrman spoke of his disgust for interracial couples and advocated genocide against blacks when she met him in 1985 or 1986.

In rapid-fire order Tuesday, Mr. Bailey — whose courtroom theatrics have prompted comparisons to famed TV detective Perry Mason — confronted Mr. Fuhrman with each of the allegations while beaming a copy of her letter to the defence on a giant court room movie screen.

"Did you say while in the recruiting station at any time that when you see a 'nigger' driving with a white woman, you pull them over?" Mr. Bailey asked.

"No," the 19-year police veteran replied calmly. "Did you ever make a

statement that if you needed a reason (to pull them over) you would find one?" Mr. Bailey asked.

"No," Mr. Fuhrman responded.

"Did you say at any time in that recruiting station in the presence of any female, including Kathleen Bell, that you would like nothing more than to see all niggers gathered together and killed?"

"No," the detective replied.

Mr. Fuhrman denied not only ever having met Ms. Bell but also that he was ever introduced by her at a restaurant to a friend named Andrea Terry.

Mr. Bailey said Ms. Terry, who lives in Utah, would testify that Mr. Fuhrman said interracial couples "violated the laws of nature."

Ruling over prosecution objections, Judge Ito said he would allow Ms. Terry to testify later during the defence case.

During the confrontation, members of the mostly black jury sat transfixed and virtually expressionless in the hushed courtroom.

Earlier, Judge Ito ruled that Mr. Bailey could cross-examine the detective about Marine Sergeant Max Cordoba's allegations about prosecutors have a chance to interview him. Since that could take days, Mr. Fuhrman may have to be recalled to the witness stand later.

With the jury absent from the courtroom, Mr. Bailey told Judge Ito that Sgt. Cordoba was at the recruiting centre in 1985 when Mr. Fuhrman — an ex-Marine — came in to apply to join a reserve unit.

Sgt. Cordoba turned to another sergeant who was handling Mr. Fuhrman's application and said, "your boy is here," Mr. Bailey said.

"And then Cordoba leaves the building and Fuhrman follows him out into the parking lot and repeats the same epithet."

Deputy District Attorney Marcia Clark scoffed at Mr. Bailey's claims, saying prosecutors had interviewed Sgt. Cordoba and he had never accused Mr. Fuhrman of using the "N-word." "These allegations get more outrageous by the minute," she said angrily.

After the explosive morning session, Mr. Bailey resumed his cross-examination of Mr. Fuhrman, relentlessly grilling him about the circumstances under which he says he found a bloody glove at Simpson's estate the morning after the murders. Its match was found at the crime scene two miles (three kilometres) away.

Since Mr. Bailey's attack began Monday, Mr. Fuhrman has seemed more like the one on trial than Simpson, who is charged with murdering Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman last June 12.

La Scala artists perform opera in plain clothes

MILAN, Italy (AP) — It's a tradition to wear your best evening clothes to the famous La Scala opera house. The performers, however, dressed down. Cast members performing Arrigo Boito's *Meftistofel* donned jeans and sweaters for the first act of Sunday night's performance to chide management. Before the opera began, loudspeakers gave an explanation for the unusual spectacle: "To protest against excessive management laxity, precarious security measures and the failure to renew this year's work contract." Director Riccardo Muti did not lose his composure and proceeded as if nothing had happened. The opera ended with a standing ovation from the audience.

Budapest Opera wants probe into cut ballet rope

BUDAPEST (AFP) — The Budapest Opera House demanded a probe into a near-accident to a ballet dancer caused by a deliberately severed rope this weekend. Management said that "a potential tragedy was averted at the last minute" when technicians noted that a rope used to lower a dancer to the stage had been deliberately cut. They helped the dancer down manually. Neither the audience, nor dancer Ferenc Havasi, who celebrated his sixtieth birthday dancing the title role of Bela Bartok's *Miraculous Mandarin*, noticed the incident at the opening gala performance of the Interballet Festival in Budapest Saturday.

French bank has sticky problem with client

HAGUENAU, France (AFP) — A French bank branch in Haguenau, eastern France, had a sticky problem on its hands — carpet, actually — when an enraged young woman client gave vent to her feelings by gluing both feet to the bank's wall-to-wall carpeting. The woman, about 20, said "I won't leave until my problem is solved", using a powerful glue to attach herself to the carpet. The bank employees, keeping mum on the incident, used solvents to unglue the feet and police to remove the annoyed client. Police said the woman had wanted to settle a financial problem relating to the ex-mistress of the young man with whom she now lives.

Drug cleared of breast cancer risk

WELLINGTON (AFP) — A study into the use of the controversial contraceptive drug Depo-Provera shows it does not increase the risk of breast cancer, one of the authors of the report said Monday. A three-monthly injected method of contraception, Depo-Provera is used by an estimated nine million women in 90 countries. New Zealand is regarded as the leading user of the method in the Western World where its use is more restricted because of fears of breast cancer. Those concerns caused the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ban it in 1978. The FDA allowed it back on the United States market in 1992. In a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, data was collected from women in New Zealand, Thailand, Kenya and Mexico. It was written by Professor David Skegg, Charlotte Paul and George Spears of Dunedin's Otago Medical School, south of here, together with researchers in the United States and Switzerland. Prof. Skegg said that although there was no overall increase in breast cancer risk, women who started using Depo-Provera in the past five years appeared to be at some increased risk. "This could be due to enhanced detection of breast tumours or to acceleration of the growth of pre-existing tumours," he said. The authors concluded that Depo-Provera's use should not be restricted on the grounds of breast cancer risk. "Nevertheless women using Depo-Provera should be informed of the possibility that the contraceptive might accelerate the risk of small, existing but undetected tumours."

Russian, Chechen forces exchange artillery fire

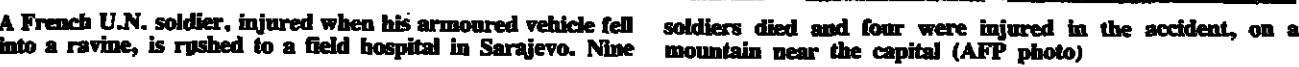
Italy confidence vote set for Thursday

Rao allows state rule with eye on votes

Canada, EU set for new confrontation

Fisheries Minister Tobin has also claimed that the fishing stocks off Newfoundland.

Another interpreter employed by UNPROFOR in Razde, Goran Posvandzic, been in detention for 20 years.



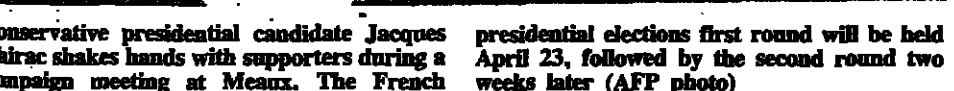
Labour unrest, bank rescue dog Ballardur campaign

...conducted from Friday through Sunday, covered

the Murayama cabinet's disapproval rating of outnum-

The nine-month-old three-party bloc of left and right

ervative LDP, the biggest force in parliament.



Castro shrugs off criticism during French visit

The nationwide opinion poll, conducted from Friday through Sunday, covered

It was the second time that the Murayama cabinet's disapproval rating of outnum-

The nine-month-old three-party bloc of left and right

Lyongyang's sudden overtures to the staunchly conservative LDP, the biggest force in parliament.

More Japanese disapprove of Murayama cabinet

Jordan Times

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On peace and promises

DURING HIS short visit to the Kingdom earlier this week, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher spoke eloquently of his country's commitment to supporting Jordan. America's promises to the Kingdom, he said emphatically, will be fulfilled.

While we are heartened by Mr. Christopher's assurances, we cannot help wondering whether the U.S. has not been taking its time in fulfilling President Bill Clinton's pledges of support for this country, whether those he made on Oct. 26 or before and after.

To the dismay of many who opted to have faith in the U.S. promises to the Kingdom, a decision by a House of Representatives' Subcommittee was taken to dramatically reduce the amount of debt forgiveness the administration has pledged to the Kingdom for this year. But the Senate can act to reverse that decision and we hope that it will in order to allow the administration to deliver on its pledges.

In the final analysis, it is a vital American interest for the U.S. as a whole to maintain its credibility as a mediator and partner in the region, especially if Washington wants to see Israel make peace with all its Arab neighbours.

When the Kingdom signed the peace treaty with Israel, it acted to meet one of its strategic interests, it is true. But that interest can only be of benefit to others when peace is established in the whole Middle East region. Now, such comprehensive peace will not be made if other Arab countries are not willing to take the necessary risks for it — and they certainly will not be encouraged to do so if Jordan is allowed to be left out in the cold in as far as American support for it is concerned.

Building peace, as distinct from making it, is a task that should be shouldered by the entire international community. Jordan will indeed lose if this peace collapses. That loss, however, will not be exclusive to the Kingdom. Europe will lose, Asia and Africa will too; so will the U.S. which has invested a tremendous amount of time and effort in the peace making process so far.

For the cause of building this peace, economic assistance to Jordan must come fast. People need to believe that peace is making a difference. Because if they do not, they will have less reasons to support it. On the other hand, the Syrians, the Lebanese and the Palestinians, among others, need to look ahead and see some promise that life will be better if they too decide to take their chances. After all, a peace that people would not support cannot be a peace in the making.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i Wednesday said demands by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres to find a substitute solution to the problem of displaced Palestinians emphasises Israel's unseriousness in the peace-making process despite the peace treaties it signed with Arab countries. Mazen Hijazi said Mr. Peres' use of the term "substitute solutions" comes after burying "the substitute homeland" expression after the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty. This shows that whenever there were attempts to end Israeli aspirations to dominate at the expense of others, new Israeli ambitions and designs arise, the writer said. This also proves that the Israelis are still working on evicting the Palestinians from their homeland through various means and are still hoping that the Arab countries would find a solution and pay the price for Israeli practices as if the Arab states were the ones which asked the Palestinians to leave their land and took them by force from there, added the writer. He said if Israel maintains this mentality then it is possible that it would ask the Arab states to compensate the refugees and displaced Palestinians after it publicly called for settling them as was expressed in the speech by Mr. Peres, who believes the issue is not a question of a right to return or compensation, but a humanitarian problem which the Arab countries and the industrialised nations should help in solving. What is shocking in these statements is that they were made by Mr. Peres, not by the Israeli hardliners or the Likud Party, the writer concluded.

AL DUSTOUR Arabic daily said in its editorial Wednesday that the visit by British Prime Minister John Major to Jordan was a great political event for the Kingdom, which sees in the United Kingdom a good friend with which it has strong historical, cultural and commercial ties. Welcoming Mr. Major, the newspaper voiced hope that his visit would contribute to enhancing cooperation between the two countries and serving their common interests. The paper said the distinguished status the United Kingdom enjoys in the Middle East can enable Mr. Major to play a more active role in supporting the peace process and removing obstacles facing it.

The View from Academia

Unhealthy attitudes produce unhealthy institutions

Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

ONE OF the many obstacles standing in the way of effective performance at the vast majority of our institutions (both public and private) is the institutions' overall attitude towards the work they do and the business they conduct. Just as individuals suffer at times from bad or unhealthy attitudes, so do institutions. At present, this is a very serious problem in our society.

In the late seventies, fresh out of college, I was employed by one of our public, and somewhat more "prestigious" and "attractive" establishments. The section I worked in was, in many ways, quite sensitive and vital, aiming to keep the public informed about what goes on locally and in the rest of the world — a very challenging job. To me, the work was indeed exciting, enriching and fulfilling, and I did my best to learn the art of the trade and assert my presence and impact.

The most frustrating part of the experience, however, came not from the work itself but from the people I was working with. We were about twenty people in all. To be honest, one must admit that three of them were not only nice people, courteous, humble, and cheerful but also supportive, helpful, encouraging, efficient, committed, conscientious, serious and impressive. The rest were not. Most spent their time gossiping, joking, complaining, going to the cafeteria, procrastinating work (some even refusing to do it, saying they are unhappy with the institution and why should they do any work for it), etc.

What bothered me most was their attitude towards their work and towards their colleagues. They had no motivation to work, no appreciation if what they were doing, no commitment, no sense of mission or calling, no respect for the institution, no care about the public they were supposed to address and serve. One of them kept saying that when the time came for him to resign, and he was intending to resign any moment (he claimed), he was going to submit his resignation on the back of a pack of cigarettes, for why waste valuable paper? (By the way, he is still working at the establishment and he is still threatening to resign). They made fun of their few colleagues who took their job seriously, made fun of each other, fought with others and with themselves (at times physically), swore, screamed, complained, and so on.

The situation was and still is to a great extent similar at most of our institutions, especially in the public sector. Generally, employees have a very low opinion of their jobs, of their institutions, and of themselves, ultimately. Naturally, the work they perform is at best half-hearted, inefficient, uncreative, mediocre and poor. This is the first damage they do. If society is to develop, thrive and excel through the conscientious efforts and distinguished performance of its institutions, how is our society to develop, thrive and excel with individuals such as those described here continually attacking its immunity system, precisely like the AIDS virus? It is noteworthy to affirm here that the

number of employees at our institutions who hold poor values and poor attitudes is quite substantial. One will not be exaggerating to say that such employees (at the various levels of the institutional hierarchical structure) are a comfortable majority. Unfortunately, our institutions (after all such people are in many cases the institutions) not only tolerate them but they also reward and promote them.

The second level of damage they do is seen through their bad influence on other employees. How is a graduate fresh out of college (in most cases ready to work and learn, enthusiastic to develop and perform, and excited about public service) to survive, develop and excel in such a dreary environment? Next to impossible? What is going to happen to the good minority who is doing its best to perform decently? Are they not going to be vexed, frustrated, marginalised, suppressed, alienated, and even forced to resign? Or they may just become cynical and sarcastic themselves and just "sell it." I once heard a "senior" administrator giving advice to an aspiring young administrator. He said to him, summing his twenty years of experience at our public institutions as an "expert" administrator: "In every department or section under you there are two to three workaholics. Give these the major bulk of the work and your department or section will be okay."

"What do you mean by workaholics?" asked the aspiring administrator of the wise guru. "Donkeys who cannot live if there is no work to do." Well, if hardworking people are viewed as donkeys by some of our "masters," one does not wonder why we have so few hardworking people at our public institutions.

Of course, not all of our institutions suffer from such unhealthy attitudes. After all, institutions are people, and wherever there is a team of decent individuals running an establishment, there is distinction and excellence. Yes, there are many distinguished teams at many of our institutions, and they are doing a superb job. But there are the others.

Another point to emphasise is that unhealthy institution attitudes are present in every country in the world. I heard over the BBC a few years ago a British MP, female and black, complain about the same matter. "What bothers me most is not the racism, nor is it the sexism. Rather, I am vexed by the parliament's amateurish, carefree attitude. People are not serious enough or committed enough." The difference, however, is that such attitudes are more prevalent and widespread in our society than they are in many others.

The causes of the problem in our society are numerous. I wish to cite three of them.

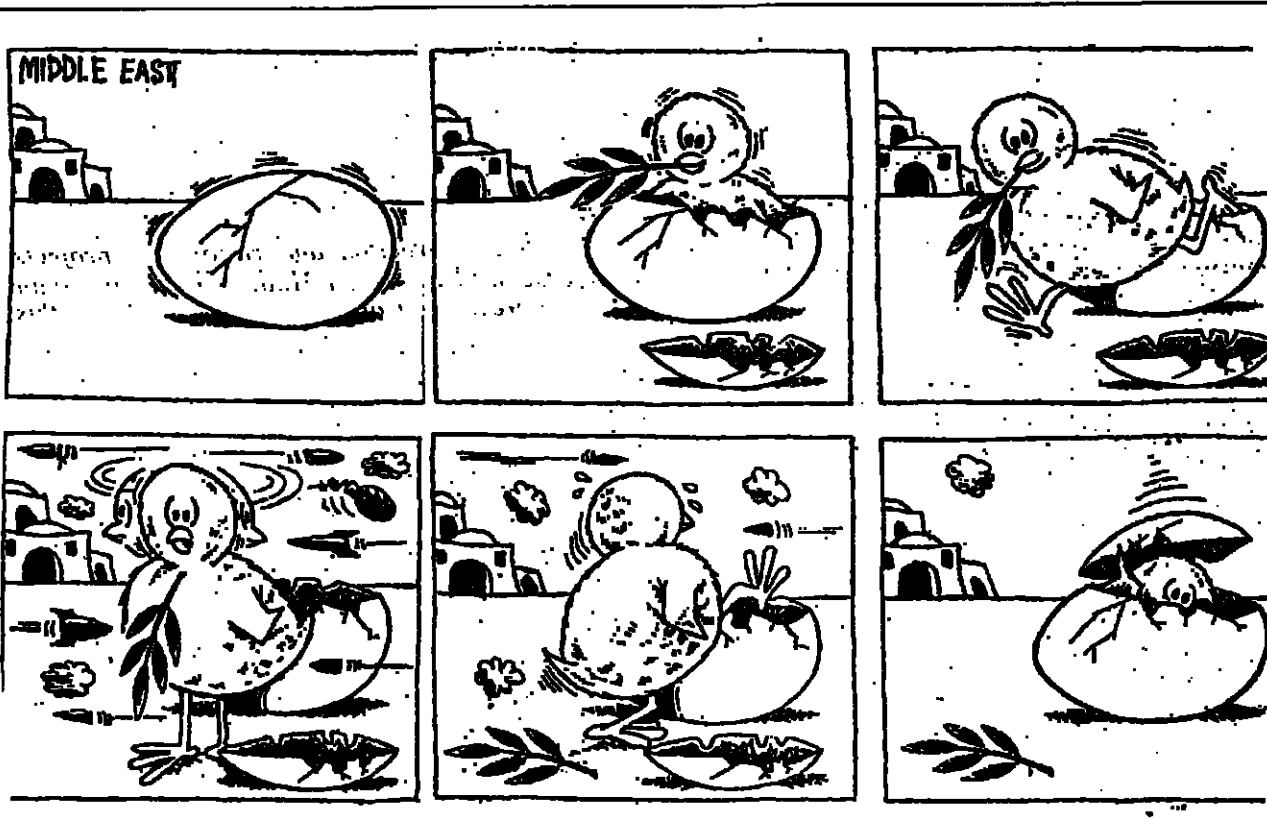
— In the good old days of the seventies and early eighties, the days when attractive job opportunities in the private sector and in neighbouring countries offered

themselves abundantly, our best university graduates and our most competitive employees (we should say most of them, perhaps), sought opportunities in the private sector and in the said neighbouring countries. What were our institutions left with? Generally, the less competitive individuals. I was shocked a few years ago when I found out that a former classmate of mine who always failed English was a teacher of English at one of our secondary schools. Similar examples abound.

— There is something seriously wrong with our criteria of hiring and promotion. Until now, we do not (except once every blue moon) appoint individuals on the basis of their past academic or service excellence. Until now, favouritism and *wasta* play a major role in final decisions about employment, and at times in a very rude and irresponsible way. I know that there is favouritism and there is *wasta* all over the world. But they are nowhere as widespread as they are in our society. This is one. The other thing is, one will understand it if an influential person seeks the employment of an acquaintance if he/she is sure this acquaintance is excellent, very good or good. But to speak and pull strings for a poor candidate (at times even an idiot), this is intolerable. Society will pay, and is already paying, the price.

— But we inherit the problem from the environment in our society at large. The roots of it are in the way we are brought up and educated. Our families, our schools, and our universities do not encourage us (in meaningful ways, that is; forget the rhetoric!) to be diligent, conscientious, committed, hardworking, proud of what we do, appreciative of our jobs. I do not think that there is in our culture an equivalent to the concepts of "career" and "calling." We may find an approximate synonym somewhere in a dictionary, but certainly not in our daily language and in our present-day culture.

The solution? Well, I am not hopeful that there will be a speedy solution for the problem is quite huge. We may have to wait until the wheel of history turns and turns with it. But the immediate solution is primarily in the hands of our legislative and executive authorities. We have to seriously reconsider the ways we hire and promote. Let's not say the right man or woman for the right job. This sounds too ideal and too much of a cliché to make sense. Let's, rather, say the following: We want to start choosing for the more sensitive and delicate and important jobs the more excellent, the more competitive, and the more promising. This is not so difficult to do, if we trouble ourselves about it a little. We do not want to throw the less competitive people, the poor, and the mediocre into the sea. God forbid. Let them make a buck in the world like everybody else. But let them shape up a little, work a little, and change their attitude a little. And let's not appoint them in jobs which they are not a match to.



The noisy foreign policy debate in America is dangerously fuzzy

By Flora Lewis

PARIS — The debate on America's role in the world is gathering steam, but it makes a shrill and sometimes hollow whistle. Other countries ask with concern if the United States is withdrawing — or, more ominously, some are preparing to seek advantage in what may become newly available space.

And yet, pretty much across the spectrum of American opinion there is a call for the United States to be robustly assertive of its "national interest." The trouble comes in defining it. The definition gets fuzzier the closer the speakers get to specifics.

In his recent foreign policy speech, President Bill Clinton appealed above all for the kind of bipartisanship that prevailed at the end of World War II, in the period of organising policies and institutions that Dean Acheson called "the creation."

Administration views and the Republican leadership's response were laid out in more detail in the new issue of Foreign Policy magazine by Secretary of State Warren Christopher and the Senate Majority leader Bob Dole. There was some harsh sniping here and there, but beneath the polemics there is a remarkable parallel in what the two

sides say is essential.

President Clinton warns against the "ripple of isolationism" that he sees emerging from both left and right.

Mr. Dole speaks out against those "on the left who believe America will corrupt the world and on the right who believe the world will corrupt America." But, he says, "the fact is that America must remain firmly engaged in the world. If we do not protect our interests, no one else will do the job for us."

Mr. Christopher lays down four guiding strategic principles: "American leadership, productive relations with the world's most powerful states, lasting institutions, and democracy and human rights." The United States will try to work with other powers, he says. But "when we disagree, we will vigorously defend our interests and our principles, and we will not countenance any notions of spheres of influence."

Mr. Dole's definition is not quite so global, but he covers all the main requirements: preventing any power's domination of Europe, balance of power in East Asia, security and stability in the Western Hemisphere, access to resources (especially Gulf oil), free trade and access to mar-

kets, and protecting U.S. citizens and property overseas. And he lists "core ideals," including freedom, democracy and the rule of law, which American foreign policy must promote.

So what's the argument? There is some opposition on the fringes. For example, an analyst from the conservative Cato Institute writes at length that Gulf policy is all wrong because there is no threat of loss of oil supplies and neither regional "instability" nor local nuclear weapons (Iran or Iraq) would hurt "U.S. security." Few would agree.

Even with regard to the much maligned United Nations, where Mr. Dole inveighs against "subcontracting American foreign policy and subordinating American sovereignty," the argument is more stance than substance. The Clinton administration is not giving anything away that Mr. Dole wants done in Washington.

The difference is primarily in tone, whether to sound warm-handed or two-fisted, reassuring or demanding. The emphasis shifts from negotiating to not-claiming, but there is not much distance between the amount of sacrifice and responsibility that the two sides urge to make sure America leads.

The purpose is essentially to draw lines for the American political battle and make them look as clear as on domestic issues. But it is unfortunate, and can be seriously misleading.

China, for example, assiduously building a blue water navy, is talking about a western Pacific without the United States, and France is pushing furiously for trade with Iraq (as well as Iran) on the expectation that the United States will renounce U.N. embargoes. The notion that America doesn't care and will soon go home can cause a lot of trouble.

Washington's apparent indifference (on both sides of the political divide) to the weakness of the dollar compounds the difficulty. The United States will not be strong if the dollar stays weak, loses its role as the currency of trade and refuge.

There is an underlying change of focus from global military politics to geo-economics, but it has not overturned the sense of America's basic interests and the kind of world it wants to shape. The noise is confusing Americans as well as friends and adversaries. But there is less there than meets the ear.

International Herald Tribune.

Nicosia's bizarre division

By Hamza Hendawi
Reuters

NICOSIA — Mention the word Cyprus and most of the two million visitors expected on the island in 1995 would picture glorious sunshine, sandy beaches and the clear turquoise waters of the Mediterranean.

Most of the tourists to Aphrodite's Isle are sun-seekers from Northern Europe and only the very keen will take time away from the beach to travel inland to see what has over the years become a symbol of the island's bitter division — the "Green Line."

It snakes across the island for 180 km and in Nicosia it gives visitors a clear view of the conflict tormenting Cyprus for decades, grounded in centuries of mistrust.

Turkey invaded Cyprus in 1974 in response to a short-lived coup in Nicosia believed aimed at uniting the island with Greece and inspired by a junta then ruling in Athens. The invaders only stopped advancing once they controlled 37 per cent of the land and in 1983 the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was declared. It is recognised only by the Ankara government.

The Green Line was first drawn by a British soldier in the 1960s to mark the division between Greek and Turkish Cypriots involved in communal fighting. The events of 1974 reinforced it as a feature of Cypriot life.

In Nicosia's old city the no-man's-land straddling it winds bizarrely across a roof, a balcony and the rusting shell of an old car.

Movement of Greek and Turkish Cypriots across the division is severely restricted by the authorities on both sides. In Nicosia, where the only legal crossing point is located, tourists can go from the Greek to the Turkish side but only for day trips.

They sometimes run into Greek Cypriot students who try to persuade them against crossing, arguing that by doing so they help perpetuate Turkish occupation, or policemen who are sometimes tempted to advise tourists against making the trip.

When they finally cross the line they enter a heavily militarised zone, with large numbers of soldiers wandering the streets or in trucks trundling down the roads, but otherwise quite similar to the land south of the division.

Heavily armed Greek and Turkish Cypriot soldiers face each other across the line from observation towers or from behind gun emplacements, separated by the United Nations monitored no-man's-land which in some parts is only five metres wide.

"It is tragic and it is such a waste," said Captain William Packard of the Queen's Royal Lancers Regiment and the 345-strong British peacekeeping contingent of the United Nations forces in Cyprus (UNFICYP).

Alongside the British soldiers are troops from Austria and Argentina monitoring the Green Line. UNFICYP, which has a total of about 1,200 men, also includes smaller contingents from Ireland, Australia, Finland and Canada carrying out non-military tasks.

Many of the houses lining the narrow and twisting alleys of the no-man's-land show scars from bullets and shells and all but a handful of them are derelict. Some have lost entire sections, others look perilously close to collapse.

The fourth century church of Ayios Iakovos has lost most of its dome and sections of its walls.

"Thirty years from now and it is all going to be a wasteland," Mr. Packard said.

A Greek Cypriot family in a first-storey flat on the edge of the buffer zone is routinely told by UNFICYP troops not to step onto the balcony because it is in the buffer zone.

The zone's empty houses and stores are given odd names for easy identification — "No Sign," "Mansion," "Four-Minute Walk" and "Beehive Lodge" among them.

There is also Annie's House, where an elderly Greek Cypriot lady lived alone for years after the 1974 invasion. A glance through a missing window reveals cutlery, china and glasses scattered among dusty furniture.

There is no shortage of graffiti — much of them undoubtedly the work of bored or home-sick U.N. peacekeeping troops.

"Dale loves Denise" and "Patrick et Valerie" contrast with more serious slogans near a Greek Cypriot army post: "Heroes fight and die like Greeks" and "We are here for a just cause."

Weekender

Iraqi artists in Amman: Trouble or fortune?

By Mohammad Masharqa

HUNDREDS OF prominent Iraqi artists and intellectuals, among them experts who enjoy Arab and international reputation for their outstanding work in different fields, fled their country to Jordan in protest against war, dictatorship, and abuse of human rights after the Gulf War. Their high concentration in Amman and to a lesser extent in other cities and their attempt to integrate into the society triggered different responses from Jordanian intellectuals.

While some Jordanians established strong ties and open channels for mutual cooperation and common projects with their Iraqi colleagues, others took a defensive position and viewed their Iraqi peers' presence as a threat and obstacle to an independent indigenous cultural movement.

Wars have always been a cause for cultural migrations and new cultural inputs in the countries of destination opened possibilities for radical changes and outstanding innovations in different fields. The French cultural movement witnessed a period of

relative renaissance in this century when many Spanish artists opposed to the regime of General Franco took exile in France. America had a similar influx of European philosophers, thinkers and artists following and during this century's two great wars.

A Jordanian daily recently commented that "the phenomenon of Iraqi fine art invasion is getting uncontrollable. We have to put an end to this invasion, since it is ingenuine and violate the rights and needs of the local artists."

It seems that many intellectuals share this point of view. "The sudden gallery expansion in the capital is created to accommodate Iraqi artists' work only. Once they leave, the galleries will close down."

The prominent Iraqi art critic and painter, Amer Fatuhi, who resides temporarily in Amman, regrets such attitudes.

"We left our country in protest against war and dictatorship. We are going through hard psychological, financial and political pressures in order to uphold our values which can make a difference one day. Our means of expression is art and accumulated experience in the field. We wish to have the chance to share it with our Jordanian hosts," he said.

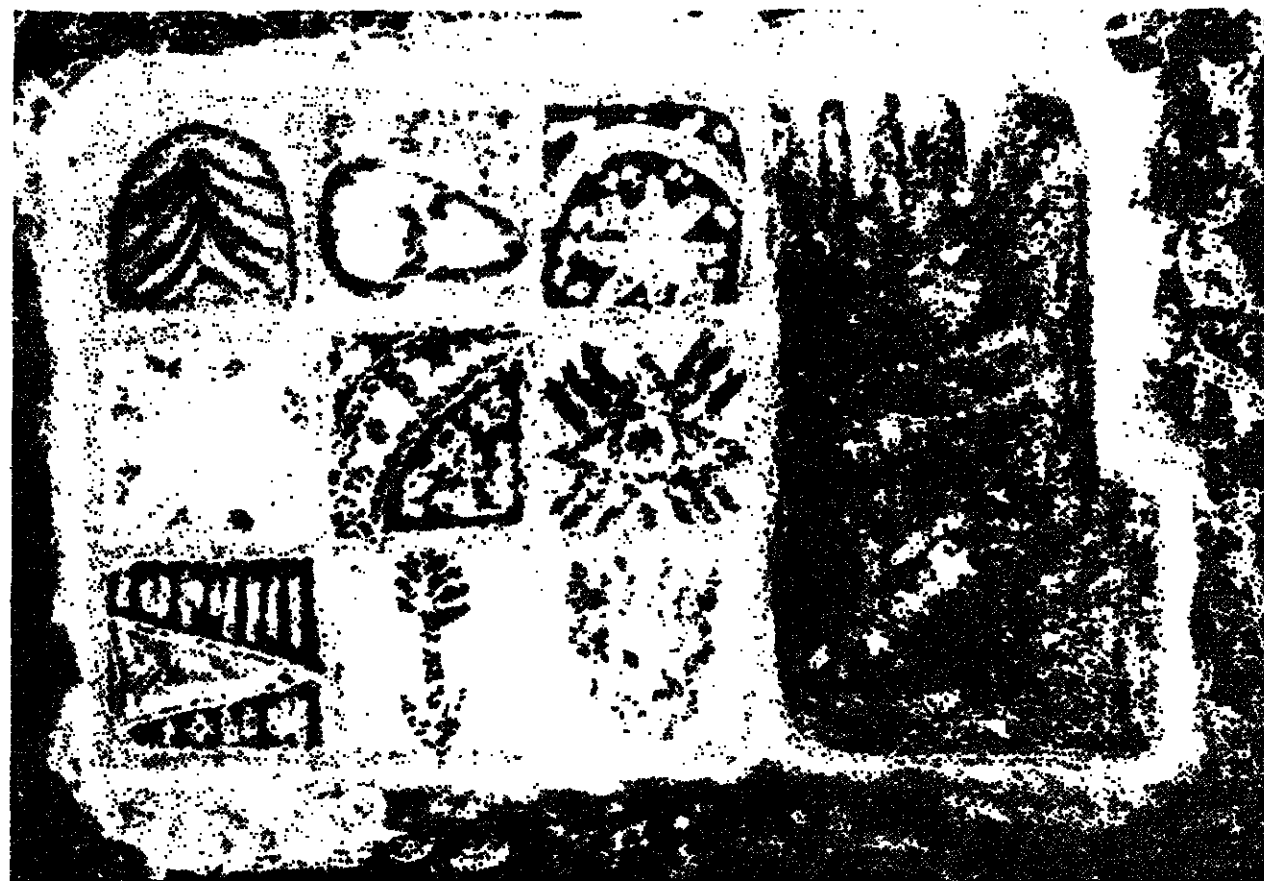
Fatuhi, who for years edited the art page in the Iraqi magazine Funun, complained that the Jordanian dailies do not give the chance to Iraqi art critics to contribute, which, he says, "gives them no chance for the effective cultural interaction."

Some Jordanians agree.

"The Iraqi art critics have a long tradition in art criticism, which is not the situation in Jordan. Why don't we learn from their experience and open channels for constructive cooperation?" Mohammed Majali, a Jordanian painter, who paid tribute to Iraqi art, said.

While many artists share Majali's opinion, what is obvious at most of the discussions over the issue is that there are many who insist that the local art movement should develop independently and exploit its own potentials.

What is obvious, though, is that in order to develop a dynamic and multidimensional cultural movement, the media should open its channels for



One of the paintings by Amer Fatuhi recently exhibited in Amman

the contributions of the different parties and should encourage open discussion about the issue at hand. Cultural and educational institutions should also sponsor workshops which would allow for cultural exchange and interaction. Isolation and negativism should be confronted at all levels through enlightened media and cultural programmes.

The Jordanian society is going through critical and transitional stage in search of an identity. This new

identity seeks to express itself through various creative media and to protect its purity and natural development from external interferences. This is understood provided that legitimate fears should not lead it into a corner.

The phenomenon of caution in itself is not unhealthy. After all it is through such diversity of opinions and stands, often extreme, that culture and new ideas blossom.



Iraqi artist Amer Fatuhi

SOCIETY ON THE MOVE

Tourism vs pilgrimage: 'Unruly' Israelis tarnish majority's image

ISRAELI TOURISM to Jordan took a beating in the Jordanian as well as the international press last week with articles condemning incidents of reported Israeli abuses this side of the river. Jordanian tabloids blasted Israeli tourists in articles which said that no sooner had these tourists started to visit sites in Jordan than several problems began to emerge. Stating that the tourists were "tampering" with these sites, one tabloid cited the controversy over a report that a group of orthodox Israeli pilgrims desecrated a religious site near Petra. The weekly, Shihan, said that even Radio Israel "admitted" that these pilgrims deleted inscriptions on the tomb of Aaron, the brother of Moses, and wrote obscenities and historical lies in Hebrew on the walls of the site. Shihan also reported that even at Mount Nebo, some Israeli tourists have written in the visitors register that the site has an important archaeological significance for Jews and that there will come a day when it will be under Israeli sovereignty. As if to back our tabloids' reports, in the latest issue of Britain's Sunday Times, Andy Goldberg, writing from Tel Aviv, reported that "Israeli officials were quick to censure what the press called 'Israel's ugly tourists.'" Goldberg, who, while trying to do good, unfortunately included some major factual inaccuracies in his article, added that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had said, "There are Israelis whose behaviour shames us and we must condemn them." But, Goldberg continued, "Tourism bosses (in Israel) point out that it is only a small, unruly minority who tarnish the name of masses of law-abiding Israeli tourists." He mentioned that the Israeli tourism ministry is preparing a Hebrew guidebook "targeted at the badly behaved." But the point of Goldberg's piece was as his headline read: "Israeli tourist hordes disturb the Middle East peace." According to Goldberg, "The sheer volume of Israeli tourists is part of the problem, especially" -- and here is one of the writer's lapses -- "at spectacular Petra, a 10,000-year-old centre of Nabatean culture." Saying that, some believe that Israeli tourism could prove to be a real threat to the peace accord, Goldberg quotes a Muhammad El Duhab, who he identifies as Jordan's minister of economy, as saying "The behaviour of some of the Israelis in Jordan is likely to endanger the peace. This behaviour, if it continues, could lead to the closure of all tourist sites in Jordan to the Israelis." Asked to comment on Jordanian tabloids' and The Sunday Times' articles, Minister of Tourism Abdul Ilah Al Khaib said, "I would like to highlight that the site in question in Petra is that of a mosque built in the 14th century by a Mamluki Sultan, Nasser Mohammad. The ministry is denying nothing. There was indeed an incident of misconduct, and, as anywhere, we expect that visitors to our country would behave appropriately and with respect." The minister added that at a recent press conference in Berlin, Israeli Minister of Tourism Uri Baram publicly apologised for what was seen by both sides as an individual incident and not a general trend by Israeli tourists. As for any controversy stemming from a decision to limit access to the site, the minister explained that the trail to the mosque is quite perilous, and that is why the ministry decided to restrict guided tours to two per week with an average of 20

visitors per tour. The minister, whose smoke-free ministry does not go unnoticed, candidly pointed out that tourism was the objective here, not pilgrimages which could bode much less positively for the industry.



Indonesian Ambassador to Jordan Mohammad Hassan Adamy, sitting with his wife, Tjut Adja Marzani and his children (standing from left) Hasduna Putri, Namzariqa and Mayuzar

QUIET IN BUSY JAKARTA: News from Indonesia, where politeness and grace abound, speaks of change on the diplomatic front. Ending his four-year tour of duty in Jordan and returning to Jakarta, possibly to retire, Indonesian Ambassador Muhammad Hasan Adamy will bid farewell to associates and friends this week at a reception he and his wife Tjut Adja Marzani are hosting tonight at the Regency Palace Hotel. The 62-year-old envoy began his foreign service career in 1957. His first foreign posting was to Tunisia from 1961 to 1964. Mr. Adamy has served also in Hungary, Guinea, Vietnam, and Madagascar. His first ambassadorial tour of duty was to Senegal, The Gambia, the Ivory Coast and Gabon, with residence in Dakar. The couple, we are sure, will be missed by their many friends and associates in Amman.

MIVAN MAN IN MAJOR VAN: Restoration is the aim of Mivan Ltd. This is the Irish firm that was contracted to conduct the delicate restoration work on the Dome of Rock in Jerusalem. Completed last summer, the work, which was funded by a \$8 million contribution from His Majesty King Hussein, was part of the

major reconstruction and restoration projects overseen by Mivan Ltd. Chairman Ivan McCabrey. McCabrey arrived in Amman this week along with the illustrious group of 30 businesspersons who accompanied British Prime Minister John Major on his first Middle East tour since becoming prime minister. Mivan has conducted extensive works in the Middle East including hotel and housing projects in Saudi Arabia. One of its more notable feats was the restoration of the luxury liner The Q. E. II. While in Jordan, McCabrey was expected to explore business prospects in the area. The restoration of the Dome of the Rock, however, could turn out to be its most prestigious and history-making accomplishment. The almost conspicuous quick whirl through the region of the British delegation seems less so when we note that St. Patrick's Day falls tomorrow and more than a few lads and lasses among the team would be at a loss without "a fiddle to jig to and a jar of Guinness to sup."

MEDIA MOGULS FROM FRANCE: While the British Isles brought in business heavy weights, the French landed a large contingent of media moguls under the flag of "Le Press Club de France." In the area for a tour of Israel and Jordan were club Director General Michel Fernet and Director of Information Isabelle Bourdet, Jeanne Assouly of France Television VSD, Philippe Duigou in charge of Service Etrangers et Tourism for Le Monde, Christian Hoche, editor-in-chief of world news for L'Express, Francoise Laborde, editor-in-chief of economic news for France 2, Mac LeCarpentier, editor-in-chief of Telerama, Christian Luc Parison, in charge of tourism service for Le Figaro, Claude Serillon, in charge of "Geopolis" for France 2, Jean Marc Sylvestre, chief of the economic service for T.F.I., Marie Boinet of Group S.E.T., Jean Claude Boucher of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Patrick Jung, director of development for Africa and the Middle East at Groupe ACCOR, Alain Mouysset, of Chandris Celebrity Cruises, and a Mr. Yosha of the Israel Tourism Office and Mrs. Yosha, who is accompanied by Mrs. de Luca of the Jordan Tourism Office in France. The ministries of Information and Tourism, as well as Royal Jordanian are hosting the French delegation who are here on a "familiarisation trip." A dinner hosted in the group's honour last night was attended by members of international and local press corps, and other invited guests.

FLYING HIGH: Accomplishments were recorded on the national level too at the 1995 Travel Industry Globe Awards which brought leaders of all sectors of the travel industry together to honour the recipients of the Travel Industry Globe Awards. Among the attendees was Royal Jordanian's very own Regional Dir./UK and Ireland Ahid Quntar who relayed the news to home base that Royal Jordanian placed among the top four candidates for the "Best Airline to the Middle East" category. The winner was Emirates, and the other two

contenders were British Airways and Gulf Air. The occasion, according to a beaming Quntar, gave RJ great publicity, and should set the stage for a big win next year.



Air Canada's En Route magazine Editor-in-Chief Lise Ravary (right) and Canadian photographer Jean Becq

MAKING FRONT PAGE: While speaking of air travel publicity, Air Canada's in-flight magazine editor-in-chief Lise Ravary arrived in Amman accompanied by world-renowned Canadian photographer Jean Becq for a 10-day visit to Jordan. Their mission: reveal Jordan's treasures to Air Canada passengers. Jordan will be the feature destination on the cover of April's "en Route" magazine, seen worldwide by more than 12 million travelers each year. The story will occupy at least 14 pages of the new, revamped in-flight magazine, published in Montreal. "With peace coming to Jordan," says Ravary, "more and more North American visitors will want to discover your wonderful Kingdom. We are here to increase awareness of Jordan as a wonderful adventure destination for world-class travelers." Ravary and Becq visited Amman, Petra, Wadi Rum and Aqaba before crossing the border to Eilat for 24 hours. "To experience the new freedom of travel between the two neighboring countries." "We were absolutely enthralled by Petra," says Becq. "We went everywhere, from the High Place of Sacrifice to see the sun rise to the Monastery for sunset. It was simply amazing to photograph." Wadi Rum, for the Canadian visitors also proved to be a wonderful experience. They slept under a Bedouin tent and explored the wadi with young Mufleh Salem Lafah, who, they say, just might find his photo on the cover of the magazine. Before leaving Jordan, Ravary and Becq promised they would return with their families for a holiday. What will they miss most? "Although Jordan is very, very beautiful," they say, "its main resource is its people. The Jordanian people were incredibly nice and hospitable. We will never forget them." Guiding Ravary and Becq throughout their trip, in what can be termed "brotherly interline ties," was RJ's Mohammad Nasser of Public Relations.

Jennifer Hamarneh

Who's 'bug free?'

By Jean-Claude Elias

A bug is not what you think it is. Or is it? If you have been using a Personal Computer (PC) for a while chances are that you have heard of software bugs. Simply put it is a programming, unintentional error. It could also be just a weakness, preventing the product from behaving exactly as the user expects it to, according to plain logic.

For example, if a programme runs out of memory, a message on the screen, alerting the operator about the problem should be displayed before the system stops. Alas, it is not always the case.

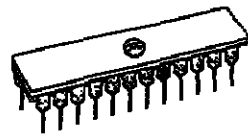
Bugs can be gross and obvious. They would often interrupt the normal execution of the programme or even produce wrong results. Commercially released products however do not contain such evident flaws. Nevertheless, minor, well hidden bugs can exist even in well known software. These could remain dormant as long as the segment to which they belong is not activated. If the function or the section of the programme in which they are rarely used, they may never show.

Novice programmers hardly succeed in writing a bug-free piece of software from the first time. Even if the work is short and simple, it would usually undergo a debugging process consisting of testing the programme by running it, locating the errors and then eliminating them.

Professionals who write large pieces of code (another name for a source programme) still produce such errors. Software has become so complicated and huge that generating a completely bug-free work would be a remarkable achievement. Without going too technical, I will just cite Microsoft Excel 5.0 — its main file alone is five million characters, not to mention other related files and Windows that all work in conjunction with it. At times, one may have as much as 10 million characters all interacting simultaneously. How can anyone guarantee the absolute purity of such an amount of data?

PC crashes therefore do occur. You may be

chip talk



enjoying a computer session and suddenly, without a warning, the machine may freeze and stop working. The only way out is to reset the PC by switching it off then on again. Naturally any unsaved data (not previously saved on a disk) is lost. If you're lucky, a message may pop up on the screen telling you what happened.

An infamous such message is the "General Protection Fault" (GPF) that Windows sometimes produces. It could happen because you are trying to run too many programmes simultaneously. It could also be due to a totally unpredictable fault in the system's handling of the extended memory. There is not much to do in such cases but shut the computer off and... try smiling.

The GPF is very rare. I use my PC extensively — several hours a day, seven days a week — and it has happened to me only once this year. Even then I did not lose much work for I had saved the file I was working on just a couple of minutes before the crash.

All bugs do not necessarily lead to sudden computer shut off. Most of them produce minor inconvenience. WordPerfect 5.1 for instance, does not eject pages properly when used with a LaserJet II compatible printer.

We have no choice but to try and adapt to software weaknesses, remembering that these are, by far, outweighed by its advantage and qualities. Besides, working with information technology is like life itself — you never have 100 per cent guarantee on anything.

The madman's manifesto

By Samer Ghaleb Bagaeen

It is very reassuring to know that there are still people around us who sense the predicaments that the Jordanian society is going through. One such illuminating thought came from the daily Al Ra'i newspaper columnist Tareq Masarweh where he yearned for reviving the gentler aspects of the Jordanian way of life of the 1940s. Part of what inspired him to write what he wrote was a book. The book by the Jordanian writer Abdel Rahman Munif, *A Biography of A City: Amman In The 1940s*.

I am quite certain that there is a lot of scope in our present ways of life to accommodate what both these writers are advocating. Personally, I have long since come to genuinely believe that our present social trends can only lead us to terrible things. And that seeking refuge in such writings is one way of escaping the present condition.

About the book itself, Munif tells us that it is not meant to be a record of Amman's history in the 1940s but should rather be taken as a "parallel" reading, one through the eyes of a person who lived in that period of time. He writes that he believes it useful to describe, how he saw things and how he knew or got to know them without referring to the accepted version of history. Hence making the whole exercise more stimulating and revealing through uncalculated explorations.

But while an author cannot force others to see people and places as he saw them or as he or she would have liked to see them, there are certain times when a passing glimpse of the past can shake people out of a callous way of existence that has long since dominated their life.

Unmistakably, our way of life has become reckless and cruel. And sadly, we can only sit and watch it become even more so. And this is where the 1940s provide us with the refuge. Those were times when Amman was full of hard working and proud indi-

viduals, where there were neither roads nor cars, neither hospitals nor universities and neither factories nor hotels, and where children walked barefooted, but where people genuinely cared for and respected each other.

So while we should not let reason and reflection control our unconscious expressions and while we should not allow imagination to get strangled by reasoned deliberation, there is always real life. And there is also the relationship between a place and its inhabitants to heed. For a place earns its characteristics through its inhabitants as they shape the spaces and places they inhabit. And the people earn in return certain attributes they would otherwise not have gained had they lived elsewhere.

So where did we go wrong? And there is no point in pretending that everything is alright with us, for the pain in our hearts and the flight of the mind to the past are the symptoms of our present malaise. But again we are trapped for we cannot bring back those older days nor would it be wise to try to revive them. Even so, we must not surrender.

Our children and grandchildren should be taught about the way our fathers and grandfathers lived. We should tell them how Amman was back then: tell them how its old name Philadelphia means brotherly love, tell them about the path of the old river that flowed from Ras Al Ain through to the amphitheatre and Ain Ghazal, tell them about the trees that flourished on both sides of this river, tell them about the flood of 1943, about the great expectations and even greater disappointments, and tell them how Amman turned to the river for life before it eventually turned its back on it when it became a city of concrete.

It is books such as the one by Munif that could get us thinking again about our present predicaments and about the madmen's new manifestoes we are forced to listen to and watch being built day in and day out. For if there is more than one truth then no one has the right answer, so why not listen to no one?

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

By Mohammad A. Shuqair

FASCINATING FACTS

★ The first playing cards were invented about 600 years ago, but no-one knows who the inventor was. The symbols of each suit stand for the different social classes of the 14th century, while the picture cards represent various historical figures. The first packs produced contained 78 cards but that many proved too difficult to handle. The Joker was the super trump and was the only one of the old pack to survive when the number was trimmed down.

★ ★ ★

★ Males are more prone to colour blindness than females. In fact, 1 in 200 males suffer against 1 in 12 men. Usually a sufferer cannot distinguish between such colours as yellow and light green. Some people are fully colourblind — all colours appear in shades of black and white.

★ ★ ★

★ The more you move your muscles, the more they produce a fluid called "sarcoplasmic acid" which gathers around the muscle, making it "tired". When you sleep or rest, your body rids itself of this acid, repairs your joints and recharges your nerve cells.

★ ★ ★

★ Does a spoonful of sugar keep the "hiccups" down? Yes, it's true. It has been proven that it can work on some people.

TIME FOR FUN

■ A man wore the table cloth round his neck while having his lunch at a renowned restaurant. The owner of the restaurant asked the waiter to draw tactfully the customer's attention to change the position of the towel. The waiter politely bowed to the man and said: "Excuse me, sir. Do you want to get your hair cut or shave?"

■ Milton, who was blind, married a wild sharp-tongued woman. It happened one day that he heard Duke of Buckingham describe her as being a rose. The poet at once said: "Though my blindness is unable to distinguish its colour, it must actually be a rose since I feel its thorns prick my sides every day."

■ FATHER: When George Washington was at your age, he used to work much and earn a lot.

SON :... and when he was as old as you are now, he was the president of the USA!

LET'S CHAT IN ARABIC

— You're a luck fellow. *Innaah shakhson mahzooz*
— Your father is an honest man. *Abokka rajulon ameen.*

— Why are you angry? *Limatha anta ghaadib?*
— She's the queen of my heart. *Innaah malikato qalbi.*

— You're a stubborn human being. *Innaah insaanon aseed.*

— She saved his career. *Aqathat mustaqbalahu.*
— Such was the result of his efforts. *Haathchi nateejato juboodhi.*

— Make yourself at home. *Khoz kameel raabatika kama law konta fee manzilik.*

BANK OF KNOWLEDGE YES OR NO

1. Are mongooses immune to snake venom?
2. Were salamanders once believed to be able to live in fire?

3. Are pikpinks small apples?
4. Was Cape Kennedy previously called Cape Carnival?
5. Is a bolero a bull-fighter?
6. Does the eating of certain fruits cause beri-beri?
7. Is Canada's longest river called the St. Lawrence?
8. Are there any frogs that nurse their young (i.e. suckle them)?

GAMES YOUR LUCKY NUMBER

Numerology is extremely fantastic and amusing. Take, for instance, your own name and see what number it is equal to. You will be able to do this in the following way: A stands for one, B for two, C for three and so on. When you reach I, which is 9, commence again and give J the value of one, then continue. To make all this clear, we will set out the values of the complete alphabet:

1 = A J S 2 = B K T
3 = C L U 4 = D M V
5 = E N W 6 = F O X
7 = G P Y 8 = H Q Z 9 = I R —

Thus, suppose your name is JOAN SHIRLEY, the letters resolve themselves in to the following numbers:

J O A N S H I R L E Y
1+6+1+5 1+8+9+9+3+5+7+ = 55
55 = 5 + 5 = 10 = 1 + 0 = 1

From all that we have said, it will be clear that the birthdate may be used for finding the personal number, or the letters of the name may be. On rare occasions, the two ways will provide the same number. When this is the case, great faith should be placed in that number. But, when the two ways give different numbers, What? Does one disprove the other? Not a bit of it. You simply have two numbers favourite to you.

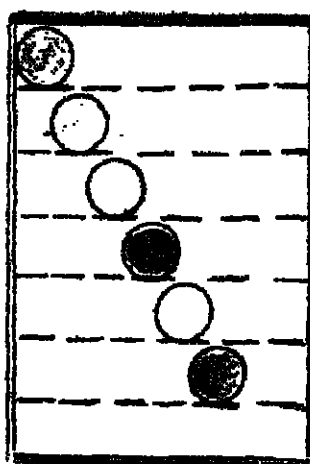
PUZZLES

A FLOATER

This planet is 95 times heavier than the planet Earth, but if it could be placed in water, it would float. Which planet is it?

Answer each clue and the diagonal line of circles will spell out the planet.

- When the sun goes down
- Takes pictures
- Mom
- On rainy days the sky is full of...
- The Amazon and the Nile are...
- We breathe this gas to live



JTV CHANNEL 2 WEEKLY PREVIEW

The programme is provided to the Jordan Times by Jordan Television. Any changes in the programme is the sole responsibility of JTV.

Thursday, March 16

- 7:30 Road To Avonlea
- 8:30 The Blue Revolution
- 9:10 E.N.G.
- 10:00 News In English
- 10:20 Feature Film
- 12:00 The Exile

Friday, March 17

- 7:30 Street Hawk
- 8:30 Desmond's
- 8:50 You Bet Your Life
- 9:10 The Law And Harry McGraw
- 10:00 News In English
- 10:20 Documentary

Saturday, March 18

- 7:30 Road To Avonlea
- When She Was Bad, She Was Horrid
- Sara trades places with Jo Pitts, a street-smart waif who could pass as Sara's twin.
- 8:15 The Nanny
- 9:10 The Cape Rebel
- 10:00 News In English
- 10:20 Ruth Rendell's Mystery — The Velled One

Starring: George Baker & Christopher Ravenscroft
The movie tells the story of an old woman who is murdered in a very mysterious setting.

12:00 Piano Concerto No. 1 by Beethoven
(The programme is presented by Dudley Moore)

Sunday, March 19

- 7:30 The Bold And The Beautiful
- 8:30 Almost Home
- 9:00 The Album Show
- 9:30 Heartbeat
- 10:00 News In English

10:20 Feature Film — Freeze Frame

Starring: Shannon Doherty & Charles Haid

The movie tells the unbelievable tale of how a team of would-be high school reporters expose corporate corruption.

12:00 The Hidden Room

Monday, March 20

7:30 The Bold And The Beautiful

8:30 Documentary — Diving In The Red Sea

9:00 South Beach

A bootlegger is tracked down after killing an FBI agent.

10:00 News In English

10:20 Scarlet And Black

Julien never stops treading on perilous grounds as he raises a new love affair.

Tuesday, March 21

7:30 The Bold And The Beautiful

8:30 Home Improvement

9:10 Documentary — The Nature Of Things

A Sky Full Of Planes

The programme exposes statistical facts pertaining to civil aviation in the USA.

10:00 News In English

10:20 Ernest Hemingway

This is an autobiographic film depicting the real-life story of the American writer Ernest Hemingway.

Wednesday, March 22

7:30 The Bold And The Beautiful

8:30 Documentary — The Marvelous Machine

9:00 Berlin Break

At Mac's urging, Willy and Valentin form an uneasy alliance and become professional "expeditors."

10:00 News In English

10:20 Prism

A local programme presented by Nida' Ramahi

10:40 Snowy River

11:10 Keeping Up Appearances

Best picture — feel-good Gump or tough Pulp

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Speculation continues in the film community about whether Academy Award voters will favour the feel-good comedy-drama Forrest Gump or the provocative, violent Pulp Fiction as best picture.

Most critics organisations have favoured Pulp Fiction, Quentin Tarantino's hard-bitten gangster saga. But academy members are inclined to be more conservative, and the general feeling is that Forrest Gump will prevail.

Also nominated for Best Picture: The British comedy Four Weddings And A Funeral; Robert Redford's drama of television's game scandal, Quiz Show; and the prison saga The Shawshank Redemption.

Along with The Lion King, Forrest Gump broke the \$300 million mark in domestic ticket

sales. "These things happen very, very rarely," said the film's director, Robert Zemeckis. "You're always just hoping that you'll make your negative costs back."

The director credits much of the success of Forrest Gump to the portrayal by Tom Hanks.

"Tom had the character 90 per cent completed by the end of rehearsals," Zemeckis said, "and he soon finished the rest. So by the time we came to the important scenes on the bus-stop bench, he was prepared. We purposely scheduled that in mid-shooting so he would be ready."

The most talked-about scenes in Forrest Gump were the hero's meetings at the White House with Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. They had been

written into the script, but how to film them? Computer magic to the rescue. Hanks' image was injected into archival footage.

Another piece of computer magic was removing Gary Sinise's lower legs after his on-screen wounding in Vietnam.

The saga of Pulp Fiction dates back to 1986, when Tarantino was trying to write movie scripts while working in a video store. He decided to write short films like the stories in old pulp crime magazines.

One of the stories became his directorial debut, Reservoir Dogs. Another was Pulp Fiction. "Studios didn't go for it," recalled producer Lawrence Bender. "But we had six offers from so-called independents. Miramax is so aggressive that we went with them. "All they asked was if it had to be that long (2 1/2

hours). We said yes. They wanted an R rating, of course, but we had planned for an R rating all along."

Tarantino was able to attract a stellar cast. "All of the actors worked on a 'favoured nations' basis, meaning they received the same fee, plus a percentage of the profits," said Bender. With the film topping an \$85 million domestic gross, the actors should be enjoying additional checks.

Quiz Show had been in development for years by Barry Levinson's Baltimore Pictures before Redford read a script in 1993. He was immediately intrigued by the tale of the scandals that ruined careers and disillusioned Americans in the late 1950s. He joined his Wildwood Enterprises with Baltimore and co-

produced and directed the film.

The casting of the role of Charles Van Doren, the scion of a literary family who confessed he cheated as a quiz contestant, presented problems.

"We had gone through the list of young American actors, but it was hard to find one who could be patrician and have depth and pain," co-producer Michael Nozik said.

"An English agent suggested Ralph Fiennes, and he came to New York from Poland, where he was filming Schindler's List. Redford had seen a little of his television work, but not much. Redford says he saw in his eyes the pain and the vulnerability and the intelligence."

Quiz Show played well in urban areas, but failed to catch a wide audience, grossing only \$24 million

domestically. The film was criticised by survivors of the scandals, who said it contained many inaccuracies.

Said Kozik: "I think the film captured the essence of those moments. It never purported to be a documentary. Characters were combined, as is done in historical pieces. The spirit of that time was accurately captured and related."

Like Pulp Fiction, The Shawshank Redemption took a long time to reach the screen. Frank Darabont bought the rights to the Stephen King novella in 1987, but didn't get around to writing a script until four or five years.

"Finally, the day came when I knew I had to either put up or shut up," the writer-director recalled. "I sat down and wrote

it in about eight weeks and got the project up at Castle Rock in a very short time."

Shawshank (the name of the prison) tells of two lifers, played by Tim Robbins and Morgan Freeman, who learn to survive in the brutal conditions of a Maine prison. The movie performed disappointingly in its release last year, though returns have picked up since the nomination. It's made \$21 million so far.

Darabont conceded the title may have been slipping to some ticket buyers.

"Given what happened to us and what happened to Quiz Show, which was pretty much released the same way, we probably should have gone to a wide release in our second week, while that critical heat was working in our

favour," he said.

"Also, for some reason American audiences seem loath to take on a movie they perceive as possibly depressing. The irony is that the picture is anything but depressing."

Four Weddings And A Funeral was a surprise nominee as best picture since comedies rarely receive Academy Award consideration. The film scored a rousing domestic gross of \$53 million and made a box-office star of Hugh Grant. He played a charming, maladjusted bachelor who balked at matrimony.

About his newfound fame: "You have to remember it's unusual for me to even have a job, let alone to have a success of a prize. ... I assume ('Four Weddings') would be a turkey, like all my other films."

Jodie Foster could win Best Actress for speaking unknown language

By Bob Thomas
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Sophia Loren won her Academy Award speaking Italian. Jane Wyman and Marlee Matlin won theirs by not speaking at all. Could Jodie Foster be chosen the best lead actress of 1994 by talking a language no one understands?

Foster is nominated for her role in Nell as the isolated mountain woman whose speech followed the pattern of her stroke-impaired mother. Also nominated for the 67th Academy Awards are Jessica Lange, the troubled army wife of Blue Sky; Miranda Richardson, T.S. Eliot's mentally disturbed first wife in Tom And Viv; Winona Ryder, the spunky Jo in Little Women; and Susan Sarandon, the tenacious lawyer in The Client.

Foster could win her third Oscar. Her first Academy nomination came as Supporting Actress in Taxi Driver when she was not yet a teenager. Her transition from child actress to adult was signaled by her Oscars for The Accused in 1988 and The Silence Of The Lambs in 1991.

Foster wasn't sure she could manage the role of Nell.

"I'm too controlling,"

she said, "and you always see too much intelligence in what I do. ... Ultimately, when you get down to it, the greatest thing about this character is that she is entirely, emotionally available."

Blue Sky, for which Lange was accorded her sixth academy nomination, had a curious history. The film was made four years ago, then was

shelved when Orion Pictures plunged into financial disarray and bankruptcy. The director, Tony Richardson (Tom Jones), died of AIDS complications in 1991.

As the studio partly recovered from its financial problems, Blue Sky was given a limited release in 1994. Critics responded favourably, especially for Lange's portrait of Tom-

my Lee Jones' wife, Carly Marshall.

Lange, Academy Award winner as supporting actress in Tootsie in 1982, was surprised by the attention she received for Blue Sky.

"It's odd with this film because there was so much delay between when we did it and when it was finally released. Your attachment to it had become very vague. To get this kind of recognition has been like a gift, a not-expected present," she said.

"Parts like Carly are easier for me, because you don't have to think about your parameters. With a character like this you can do anything. It's great to be able to take it as far out there as you possibly can. To me that's the most fun."

Richardson, who was nominated as supporting actress in Damage in 1992, returns as contender for lead actress.

Vivien Eliot was a tragic figure whose erratic behaviour prompted the poet T.S. Eliot to commit her to a mental institution where she peacefully lived out her days. Richardson, who was praised for her role as the Irish terrorist in The Crying Game, was asked if playing the emotion of the erratic Viv proved an ordeal.

"I think people want to



Actress Winona Ryder as Jo March in the film Little Women



Actress Jodie Foster (centre) as Nell in a scene with Liam Neeson and Miranda Richardson from the movie Nell (AFP photo)

hear that it was, that you had a nervous breakdown," she smiled. "It was really quite joyful to play, because she has a chance to express herself in what she does. It is actually quite liberating."

Ryder, nominated for her supporting role in The Age Of Innocence last year, was cited for her lead performance in Little Women. It's the same role Katharine Hepburn played in 1933 and June Allyson in 1949.

Ryder recalled seeing the two previous versions when she was younger,

but she avoided them in preparing for the new film.

"I kind of instantly connected to a lot of the stuff she was going through," Ryder said. "Normal adolescence has always fascinated me in terms of portraying it because it is so complicated and contradictory."

"She struck me as human, as opposed to a lot of characters you read in scripts, who are either one way or another. Good or bad. Right or wrong. I saw Jo as full of everything," Sarandon has remarked

that many people have suggested to her that she resembles O.J. Simpson prosecutor Marcia Clark. The resemblance may not only be physical; it may relate to Sarandon's role as the dogged, dedicated lawyer in The Client, which won her an Academy nomination.

In the last film that brought her a nomination, Lorenzo's Oil, the actress played a mother who defied the medical establishment to seek a treatment for her disabled son. In The Client, she is Reggie Love, who battles the leg-

al powers to protect a boy who witnessed a murder. "Lately, I like to play people that I like and I admire," she observed. "Because in spite of the frailties, they take a chance of some kind."

"They're all people who come up against a moment when they have to act on their own, and they decide to become a protagonist in their own lives. And that's interesting. I'm not interested in playing people who know at the beginning of the movie that they're heroes."

Will Tom Hanks double up and beat the dealer?

LOS ANGELES (AP) — If Tom Hanks is proclaimed best actor of 1994 at the Academy Awards on March 27, he will have accomplished a movie-dom rarity: winning Oscars back-to-back.

It's not exactly on a par with a Grand Slam in tennis or UCLA's string of NCAA basketball titles. But only four actors have done it in academy history — Luise Rainer, Spencer

Tracy, Katharine Hepburn and Jason Robards. Nominated this year as the overachieving simpleton in Forrest Gump, Hanks last year was named best actor for Philadelphia.

Hanks is no shoo-in, according to conventional wisdom. Hollywood dearly loves a comeback story, and few have been as dramatic as John Travolta's return as the hit-man charmer in Pulp Fiction.

The Best-Actor category includes three other powerful performances: Nigel Hawthorne, the dotty monarch in The Madness Of King George; Paul Newman, the town crank in Nobody's Fool; Morgan Freeman, the pragmatic convict in The Shawshank Redemption.

When Freeman first read the script of The Shawshank Redemption, he was taken with the

character of Red, the lifer in a brutal prison who earns a reputation for supplying all the other convicts' needs, no matter what the contraband.

"It was a great script and a great character," the actor commented on the set of Seven, his current film. "Red is the narrator of the film, so he sort of dictates the action. It's the kind of role an actor yearns for."

The role brought his third Academy Award nomination; he previously was named for support as the street pimp in Street Smart and for lead actor as the driver in Driving Miss Daisy.

Freeman is not one of those actors who agonises over his roles. "I just look over the script and deliver the lines," he said. "I figure if you have to talk too much about a part, maybe you shouldn't be doing it."

Through most of his career, Hanks had been known as a comedy actor, beginning in a silly sitcom, Bosom Buddies, and rising to an Academy Award nomination as best actor for Big. Last year, he went serious as the AIDS-stricken lawyer who fights for his job in Philadelphia.

The Oscar resulted.

"I have been walking on the peaks of the moon for a couple of years," he told the media after winning his Golden Globe for Forrest Gump.

"I know that I am going to choke one of these days down the line. I hope I have my head in a pretty good place when that happens. I know for a fact, folks, that one of these days at a press junket or a film opening, you're all going to say, 'what happened, Tom? Why did you — what prompted you? What were you thinking?'"

Hawthorne created the role of the daft George III on the stage and repeated in the movie The Madness Of King George, winning critical acclaim as well as an Academy Award nomination. Born in Coventry, England, and raised in South Africa, the actor was little known in the United States. He long has been one of England's distinguished actors in theatre and television. His few films include Gandhi, Firefox and Demolition Man.

"The Oscars were something in a million years I never would have associated myself with, even as a member of the

audience, let alone as a nominee," he said. "It was just beyond the scope of my imagination."

"Now it's all sort of starting to get a reality. I'll have to iron my shirts and all that."

Industrial-strength Newman, longest lasting of today's stars, tallied his eighth best-actor nomination for his role in Nobody's Fool. He received the Oscar for The Colour Of Money in 1986.

With Hud, The Hustler, Cool Hand Luke and other films, Newman established his portrayal of the anti-hero, society's loser. He speculated: "I think it's a way of saying, 'there's more to me than what I look like.'"

"I didn't seek out those roles. They're probably written better. Maybe it's because the writers — good writers — try to choose people who are loners or anti-heroes for characters."

Travolta's last Oscar nomination came in 1977 for Saturday Night Fever. "I'm pretty excited about being rediscovered by the academy," he said, adding that his roller coaster career since 1977 "makes me much more appreciative."



Tom Hanks in the movie Forrest Gump

The actor said that when he read Quentin Tarantino's script he realised "I had to pull out all the stops. ... I said to myself, 'this is one of those rare opportunities of a good script — maybe even a great script — and a terrific director who's will-

ing to put his reputation on the line.'" Travolta said he five "reborn" by the reaction to Pulp Fiction — "I wasn't that I just couldn't get a job; the jobs I got were not near quality that I started with."



John Travolta in a scene from Pulp Fiction

Audiological technology is successful How Beethoven could be helped today

By Eberhard Nitschke

BONN — "Beethoven's house is Bonn's landmark," says the tourist brochure. Bonn will this year celebrate the 225th birthday of Ludwig van Beethoven, the town's greatest son. The many thousands of Beethoven fans who every year visit the house where he was born, which is now being renovated, also find four technical exhibits which are closely bound up with the genius's fate. They are his ear trumpets — the attempts of a then still impotent technology to help the deaf — with which the great composer, who lost his hearing early, tried to complete his life's work.

The "apparatuses" were constructed between 1812 and 1814 by mechanic Johann Nepomuk Mälzel, who later became famous for inventing the metronome (the instrument used in music for marking time). Beethoven, born in Bonn in 1770, died in Vienna in 1827. His last grand piano, made available to him by the Viennese court pianist Konrad Graf, was a special construction for someone hard of hearing. The piano came to Bonn via Switzerland.

Admirers of Beethoven's music today are shocked by such an aid. Ulrich Schindler, Beethoven's confidant and secretary, reported four years before the master's death that Beethoven's "tuning of the instrument with an 'unharmonious, almost deafening' effect on listeners. The state-of-the-art in technology and medicine in those days couldn't help Beethoven."

Today, the German company Siemens, one of the world's biggest electronics firms, advertises its hearing aids with



The three-channel in-ear hearing aid INISTA Top of the German company Siemens (above) is a marvel of technology. The barely visible aid can, without remote control — merely by a press of a button by the elderly man pictured — be tuned to up

to four hearing programmes, even when there is disturbing background noise. Below, one is shocked when one sees in Bonn the four hearing instruments that Ludwig van Beethoven used in vain (IN press photo)

Beethoven's problems, although without naming the master. The company has achieved with new hearing aid amplifiers — what hitherto hardly

seemed possible — to so amplify low tones that they enter the malfunctioning ear undistorted. "K-Amp" is the name of an integrated semicon-

ductor switch. It has been developed for patients, such as Beethoven was, whose demands for tone quality are particularly high — Inter-Nations.

WEEKEND CROSSWORD

IN CUE

by Chuck Deodene

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On patrol with masked gendarmes

By Robert Fisk

In streets lost to the government spotters for the Islamist activists are everywhere

BAD EL OUED, Algeria — Commandant Mohammad of the Algiers Gendarmerie studied the graffiti with indifference. Children played in the mud and sewage by the roadside, and dirt had sprayed onto the windows of his armoured Toyota but the words were clear: "The gendarmes and the police are infidels." The commandant shrugged. "We're used to it," he muttered. His comrades, most of them in ski-masks and black hoods, ignored the graffiti. It was the least of their worries.

Through the poverty of Algiers we drove in a crocodile of green and white land cruisers, Kalashnikovs pointed from the doors of the rear vehicles, between crowds of young men, sometimes hundreds of them who stood in the ordure and garbage that lay piled along the tracks through Chateau Rouge, Cherchara, Gaid Gassem, Eucalyptus, Houassour. Sometimes we broke into open country, the 15 gendarmes in their green paramilitary uniforms running into the orange orchards around Blida to search young men at gun point — very young men most of them, hands high, faces filled with terror, the muzzles of assault rifles caressing the backs of their necks.

In the fifth of Guy de Constatine, we waded ankle deep through rotting cloth and scrap metal as the gendarmes pursued two other young men who were brought back from the banks of a stinking river with their hands in the air. They were neither beaten nor insulted, but would have been dead if they had moved. Commandant Mohammad looked through their papers as one of his men walked up with a belt-fed machine gun under his arm. "It's OK," he said softly to one of them. "Get going, you were just scared."

Understand. And he touched the boy on the shoulder with his hand. We stood there panting with the exertion, the gendarmes in their flak jackets, eyes black and narrow through the slits in their ski-masks. "Go fast, move," the commandant said quietly into his Motorola radio when we had reboarded. "We never leave by the route we came by in case they've prepared an ambush or a bomb for us."

We drove gingerly past a vast crater between the walls of slums, a gas canister of explosives directed at



'NINJA' IN ACTION: Ski-masked members of Algeria's paramilitary police, known as Ninja, handcuff a 26-year-old Algerian (Photo by Robert Fisk)

another patrol, Commandant Mohammad, an inverted tourist guide, pointing out places of dangerous attraction, two gutted supermarkets, a burned-out gas factory, a row of carbonised trucks belonging to a government cooperative, a wrecked school with shattered windows. Once we passed an entire railway train, its row of silver carriages burned and twisted in a siding. "That's where we shot two terrorists," the commandant said as we passed a grocery store. "Yesterday we shot one in Berkhadem. He had an automatic pistol on him."

Because of their ski-masks and black hoods, the people of Algiers long ago named Commandant

Mohammad's men the "Ninjas" — it was not said in admiration but the gendarmes like the title — and there is little doubt of the feelings they evoke. One man watched them from a shop in Climat de France, clenching his fists in anger, groups of youths staring with hatred, others ignoring the patrol as if we did not exist, as if their war had already defeated the authority which the commandant's men still represent. The gendarmes stopped a van carrying a cheap plywood coffin and the mourners in the back looked right through the Ninjas as if they were made of glass.

"Watch how the guys in the distance hurry away when they catch sight of

us," the commandant said. And, sure enough, when we watched the far end of streets, men could be seen moving swiftly towards doorways, alleys, corridors that opened onto the road. "It's crawling with them," Commandant Mohammad said as we entered Cherchara. "This place isn't what they call 'liberated' but it's with them, everyone who lives here. In the elections, it was 100 per cent FIS."

Only rarely did he mention the acronym of the Islamic Salvation Front, whose inevitable victory in national elections three years ago was annulled by a military-backed government, provoking the very violence which forced Commandant Mohammad's 150

men of the Escadron de Securite Routiere to give up their BMW motor-cycles in favour of armoured vans. He preferred other titles for the FIS: "outlaws" or "terrorists" or just "them."

The facts came pouring from him like the rapid fire of his Kalashnikov. Almost all the armed Islamists carry Israeli weapons — "Scorpions or Uzis" which he thought must have been smuggled across Algeria's long and ungated borders with Morocco, Libya, Tunisia or Mali. They were making bombs with butane gas bottles filled with explosives, glass, acetone, sulphur and iron filings, buried in the roads and detonated with batteries. "What these people do is not Islamic,"

he said. "You don't slash the throats of women, kids and foreigners to be a Muslim." But he showed a healthy respect for his enemies. "They are organised. There is a 'brain' behind them. These are people who evolve with the situation. They change. They used to use stolen hunting rifles."

Now they use automatic weapons and explosives. They strike wherever they want and they have 'spotters' and they have a method. The leaders know each other but those who do the attacks don't know each other. It's a pyramid structure."

It was the old story of insurrection. The Islamists

one spot or they can mount an ambush they attack in bands of 20 or 30 — the Ninjas are more at ease. At one point we ran through fields of yellow rape seed beneath snow-touched mountains near Blida, the gendarmes raising their rifles at a figure in the grass, only to be confronted by a schoolboy carrying a school satchel who refused to raise his arms. The Commandant grinned at him. "It's OK," he said again. But not in Chateau Rouge where the Ninjas pounced on a cafe full of men — "hands against the wall, spread your feet, papers" — and handcuffed one grim-faced figure with a dark beard. "He's wearing Reebok shoes — they cost 200 U.S. dollars here — how did he get the money?" the commandant asked. Two miles further on, 26-year-old Mohammad Beninal had his handcuffs removed. He wasn't on the police computer.

Later, in Bab El Oued, the hardest of all the Islamist strongholds in any Algerian city, Commandant Mohammad and his men strung themselves along the pavement, watched by perhaps a thousand young men, so that I could take photographs. "It's swarming with spotters," he muttered. "Look at the way they look at us." The gendarmes pointed their rifles at the roofs, balconies, pavements, as the crowds grew thicker, more disturbed, as if they might tear the policemen apart. Commandant Mohammad insisted that a burst of fire in the air would clear the street if there was trouble. But after just two minutes, he looked at his watch. "We should go," he said. "Now."

And so they went, 15 men whose bravery could not be questioned but with a task as sombre as it appeared almost impossible. I wondered amid the orchards and slums, how many new recruits to the GIA the identity checks had created. Support for authority does not come from a rifle at the neck. Almost every street through which we passed had effectively been lost to government control, every district patrolled by groups of young, angry men, the gendarmes treated as interlopers rather than protectors. To be sure, there are no 'no-go' areas in Algiers, but there are now no safe ones either.

The Independent

Prince Hassan, Peres meet Kohl

(Continued from page 1)

Prince and attended by Mr. Peres, Mr. Marin, Mr. Kinkaid and the delegation accompanying the Crown Prince. Chancellor Kohl's hosting of this discussion in the presence of the EU (officials)

shows Germany's and the EU's interest in financing the projects, Prince Hassan told Jordan Television. "Of course I said that we have discussed the issue also with the British prime minister during his visit to Amman

yesterday and our contacts with the French government continue."

In the morning Mr. Peres raised the issue with Finance Minister Theo Waigel and Development Minister Carl-Dieter Spranger.

Clinton sees chance for peace

(Continued from page 1)

Christopher and Mr. Ross worked out with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad and announced in Damascus on Tuesday, Mr. Ross will "make suggestions" on security and other issues that have not been solved since Israel and Syria began their peace talks in October 1991, a senior U.S. official said.

The week-long, five-country swing turned out to be "one of the most satisfying trips I've made to the Middle East," despite beginning in a sour atmosphere in which progress looked difficult to achieve, Mr. Christopher told reporters as he flew home.

U.S. officials said the talks were expected to start at the beginning of next week in the U.S. capital, but that no announcements would be made on specific dates of meetings.

Mr. Christopher rejected suggestions that the two envoys, Israel's Itamar Rabinovich and Syria's Walid Al Huallem, had no authority to basically read position papers at each other. "I'm satisfied there be ve-and-take bargaining," he said. A senior U.S. official briefing reporters aboard the plane taking Mr. Christopher back to Washington said the summit talks would have a more planned structure than before. He suggested December's chiefs-of-staff meeting

had been premature. The officials said Washington hoped the talks would give a clearer sense of each side's priorities for post-withdrawal security arrangements — the subject that dominated Mr. Christopher's talks in Israel and Syria.

"That's the basis on which you begin to establish... where is there potential for trade-offs here," he said.

Syria meanwhile ruled out any territorial concessions over the Golan Heights in the quest for peace despite agreeing to resume negotiations with Israel.

Diplomats in Syria described Mr. Christopher's mission as a rescue operation and said the announcement for a resumption was the least he could do to save the peace talks from collapse.

A terse statement issued by the Syrian presidential palace confirmed the ambassadors would be heading back to Washington and said "discussions on further steps will

take place in light of the results of these talks." Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres spoke of a new door opening up for peace with Syria but conceded that Israel "made no concessions."

"At this stage we have made no concessions, we have opened a door for negotiations," Mr. Peres told Israeli Radio in an interview from Bonn.

The official Syrian Press drove the point home Wednesday that Israel was still insisting that Syria comply with U.N. resolutions and give back all occupied territory.

Al Thawra daily said peace must still be based on a "total withdrawal" from the Golan Heights and that any resulting security arrangements, the focus of Mr. Christopher's talks with Mr. Assad, must be equal for both sides. It rejected any solution which "consolidated the occupation and imposed Israel's hegemony."

Kuwait Islamists want end to ban on parties

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait's stability is threatened by inadequate popular involvement in politics and it should lift a ban on political parties, an Islamist group said in remarks published on Wednesday. "We are very late in taking this step (permitting parties)," Issa Al Shaheen, spokesman of the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), was quoted as saying by Al ANBA newspaper. "Failure to respond to the hopes and ambitions of the people in changing towards the better — by developing popular participation — poses a threat to stability," Mr. Shaheen said. "The economic and social costs of delayed popular participation are high in comparison to (those of) participation that grows naturally." The ICM is widely regarded as Kuwait's version of the Muslim Brotherhood.

British premier ends visit

(Continued from page 1)

British engineering equipment worth \$3.5 million to the Water Authority of Jordan and scholarships for Jordanian diplomats and students.

Mr. Major's discussions with the King over dinner at the Royal Palace Tuesday night were believed to have dealt with the Middle East peace process, Jordanian-British relations and regional and international issues of mutual interest, such as the situation vis-a-vis sanctions-hit Iraq and the conflict in former Yugoslavia.

One of the key themes during the Crown Prince's briefing was a call for a free trade zone stretching from the Atlantic to the Gulf, an area that would have 370 million people — including Turkey and Iran — with a gross domestic product of \$1 trillion.

thinking that he was among the injured.

"The doctor kept asking me about his brother while he was aiding people, and I had his name on the list of the people who were killed, but I could not tell him. It was a hard and sad moment," Dr. Muguirah said.

He said that one doctor who was treating the victims was looking for his brother

More bloodshed in Istanbul

(Continued from page 12)

Istanbul Prefect Hayri Kozakcioglu to stand down. Meanwhile the Alawites buried victims of the clashes with police.

More than 5,000 mourners attended the burial of six bodies as hundreds of soldiers stood nearby in the Gazi district. They shouted slogans against the government and called the police "murderers."

Meanwhile, an army general negotiated for a peaceful funeral with the demonstrators in Gazi, where the government replaced police with soldiers after the

Questions remain on accident

(Continued from page 1)

After talks on Tuesday, Dr. Erekat had voiced disappointment saying there had been "nothing new in the Israeli position," put forward.

The news agency also announced that 45 Jordanian companies will participate in the Cairo International Trade Fair, which opens on Saturday. Dr. Sedki will open the fair, an annual event. Thirty-five Arab and foreign countries will be taking part.

PLO and Israel draft deal

(Continued from page 1)

to make the internal preparations for elections, including preparing maps and voting districts and counting the people," Mr. Singer said.

Mr. Singer and Dr. Erekat are to meet next week for head-to-head talks in autonomous Jericho before the full delegations meet again in Cairo on March 28-29.

The two sides also disagree on whether Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem stand as candidates in the elections and the make-up of an agreed-upon international observer team.

After talks on Tuesday, Dr. Erekat had voiced disappointment saying there had been "nothing new in the Israeli position," put forward.

Joint committee meets today

(Continued from page 1)

tries are the central theme of that meeting.

In addition, the meeting, to be held at the headquarters of the Arab League in Cairo, will also review the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its impact on Arab economies, particularly agriculture, Petra said.

The news agency also announced that 45 Jordanian companies will participate in the Cairo International Trade Fair, which opens on Saturday. Dr. Sedki will open the fair, an annual event. Thirty-five Arab and foreign countries will be taking part.

British team briefed on economy

(Continued from page 12)

tended debt relief to the Kingdom.

He also reviewed the rescheduling of part of the Kingdom's foreign debts, mainly owed to the Paris Club of creditor governments and the London Club of commercial institutions.

Dr. Nabulsi expressed hope that the foreign debts of Jordan would be brought down to \$3 billion in three years from the present \$5.5 billion.

Mr. Needham, the British minister, said his country was attaching importance to the Amman economic summit to be held in October. The British government as well as the private sector will play a key role in the summit, he said, adding that peace between Jordan and Israel had made it possible for businessmen and governments to consider closer involvement.

The British government has decided to deepen its economic involvement with the countries of the Middle East through infrastructure projects, he said.

While in Amman, Mr.

Needham also relaunched the agency office of British-made Rover cars, which are coming back to Jordan after a hiatus of several years.

On Tuesday, the British and Jordanian private sectors signed an agreement under which the British Committee for Middle East Trade and the Jordanian Businessmen Association undertook to organise regular meetings and roundtable discussions between Jordanian and British businessmen and industries on developing cooperation and joint ventures.

Mr. Needham said his government fully supported the initiative.

Mrs. Major visits Jerash

Norma Major, the wife of the British prime minister, on Wednesday visited the Greco-Roman city of Jerash.

Mrs. Major, who was received by senior Jerash Governorate officials, was briefed on the history of the city and its significance.

At the end of her visit, she was presented with a token gift by Jerash Governor Abdul Ghani Al Abdullat.

Iraqi paper demands deadline

(Continued from page 12)

editorial described it as "unique in the history of conflict between the central government" and rebels in the area.

It also mentioned clashes in southern Iraq between government troops and Iranian-backed dissidents.

The editorial accused the United States of being behind the clashes. It said Washington's aim was to weaken the central authority by expanding areas under rebel control.

The official press reported on Wednesday that President Saddam had chaired a meeting of officials and military commanders including Defence Minister Ali Hassan Al

Majeed. No details were given.

The trade sanctions have crippled the economy. The Security Council decision had an immediate impact on prices and the value of the currency.

The editorial said the dinar sank to a record low of 1,200 to the U.S. dollar on the black market. The dollar was trading at about 1,000 a week ago.

"This has started to reflect in a manner (the enemies) did not dream of and did not think it would be within their reach," the paper said.

Arab Gulf states refloat idea of dropping dollar link

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab Gulf states, which control nearly 45 per cent of the world's oil, are again floating the idea of abandoning the U.S. dollar as an official price of crude.

Their economies have been severely hit by the weakening of the greenback over the past decade.

Calls to adopt a basket that includes the dollar and other major world currencies resurfaced last year after a further decline in the dollar and picked up this month following a record plunge in the U.S. note.

But while some officials and experts see such an option as an ideal solution to minimise losses, others argue it is not that easy.

"The alternative for revising the oil pricing system, including a basket of currencies is in my opinion too complicated," Jouan Al Dahiri, undersecretary of the Abu Dhabi finance department, said Tuesday.

"There have been a lot of calls and studies proposing such a change. This shows that switching to a basket of currencies is not a quick solution as it needs the agreement of all oil producers," he told Al Bayan newspaper.

Mr. Dahiri said the refusal of some oil producers to drop the dollar price could prompt consumers to buy more oil from them, while setting up a new pricing mechanism that would please all producers could be "a difficult process."

His comments followed calls by United Arab Emirates (UAE) minister of state for finance and industry, Ahmad Al Tayer, for

emergency talks of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) oil and finance ministers to discuss abandoning the dollar after last week's record decline against the Japanese yen and the German mark.

Qatari Oil Minister Abdallah Al Atteyya, addressing a gas conference in Doha Monday, also proposed switching to a basket of currencies or to the International Monetary Fund's Special Drawing Rights as a new pricing system for oil.

The idea was also floated by the Gulf Organisation for Industrial Consulting (GOIC) at talks between the six-nation GCC and Japan in Tokyo late last year.

A GOIC paper at the conference, which brought together more than 400 officials and businessmen from the two sides, highlighted the

plight of Gulf oil producers because of the weak dollar and suggested a change.

"The paper proposed a balanced basket of currencies as a realistic pricing formula for oil to reduce the losses inflicted on our countries as a result of the weakening in the U.S. dollar," GOIC expert Mohammad Khawajkeya said from the organisation's headquarters in Doha.

"Actually, such a formula is more realistic than the dollar because it would offset future fluctuations in the U.S. currency. It could include the dollar itself along with the yen and other major world currencies," he added.

GCC states depend heavily on oil exports and the decline in crude prices over the past decade has slowed down their economies, forced them to borrow and turned their

Australia remains top beef exporter

GENEVA (AP) — Australia remains the world's number one beef exporter, according to an annual report published by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Tuesday. Meat demand world-wide rose in 1994 and was met with large supplies of both red and white meat. Prices were stable due to reduced European Union beef exports which allowed other countries a chance to expand their shipments. The WTO report entitled "The International Markets for Meat" examines production, consumption, trade and prices of beef and veal and summarises developments in pork, poultry and mutton. East Asian markets were most buoyant in 1994 with beef and poultry in particularly high demand. North America enjoyed record meat supplies which led to lower prices and an increased share in world meat exports. The former Soviet Union and most eastern and central European countries fared less well with markets affected by falling domestic demand and reduced supplies. The report forecasts a healthy growth in world production of all meats next year as economic recovery boosts demand.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY MARCH 16, 1995

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You can impress one in power in the morning with your abilities, but don't rest on your laurels. Be more encouraging to the ideas and suggestions of others.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Use your intuition which is accurate now in handling financial affairs. Think along optimistic lines and be logical in any direction.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Your intuition is working fine early in the day, but don't trust it later on. Don't take any risks dealing with others in business.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Make plans to have more abundance in your future. The planets are most favourable today for getting ahead in career matters you are involved in.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Be sure to complete any tasks left undone before taking on any new projects today. Don't discuss important business matters with experts unless you're positive they're qualified.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Plan early for whatever you want to do and then carry through intelligently. This can be a particularly fine day for you in any project you're involved in.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Take time to put your business affairs in better order. Await a better time for looking into new outlets and use care while you are in motion.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Support persons who have been loyal to you in the past. Show increased devotion to a loved one today. Plan for the future in your personal life.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Study your money situation today and make plans to have more financial security. Strive to be more efficient at work and success will appear.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You have confidence with higher ups early today and gain their support and goodwill. Take time to improve your appearance and the way others see you.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Obtain the information you need from the right sources today. A financial expert can give advice for any plan you have in mind which will help others too.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You may want to join with friends for a good time but don't forget to handle a prior commitment that requires your immediate attention. Then relax later.

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY MARCH 17, 1995

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Being with friends and improving the association is fine today. Take pains to handle routine task in efficient manner. Get it all out of the way.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Show appreciation to those who have power over your affairs and gain their further goodwill. Use modern methods to improve your work today and thus increase your success.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) See what you can do about enlarging your vision so that you may advance in your line of endeavour and be wise to any methods that will help you along.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Take no risks with your health today. Handle your responsibilities more efficiently and it becomes easier for you to get them done.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Support those associates who need your help now. Listen to the complaints of family members today and give help where needed to solving problems. Don't put this on a back burner.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You have to be more enthusiastic if you are to get the tasks done that are important to you today. Strive for increased happiness in your personal life.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Take time to put your business and financial affairs in better order. Be sure to keep promises that you have made to others and you will be well respected.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Be more considerate of the needs of family members today and in establishing more harmony at home. Avoid one who gossips too much about everything... especially about you!

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Discuss your views with associates and improve regular routines today. Plan how to gain your most cherished aims and make the effort to make them happen.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Look over your financial condition and then confer with experts to improve it. Take no risks in motion today or there could be trouble.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Use tact with others and they will soon give you the favours you desire. The evening is fine for social pleasures with the one you are fond of.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You are able to communicate well with associates and can advance in career matters today. Sidestep a troublemaker and you will be successful.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

Russian Duma passes budget at final reading

MOSCOW (R) — Russia's parliament approved the 1995 budget Wednesday and Finance Minister Vladimir Pavlov said the decision meant Russia moved on to a "civilised path of development."

The State Duma lower house of parliament approved the draft budget by 289 votes to 81 with no abstentions on its fourth and final reading, clearing another hurdle to a \$6.4 billion standby loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The budget envisages expenditure of 248.34 trillion roubles (\$52 billion at current exchange rates) and income of 175.16 trillion roubles (\$37 billion) for a deficit of 73.18 trillion roubles (\$15.4 billion).

Mr. Pavlov said the deficit, originally put at 7.8 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) would in fact be 5.6 per cent as GDP would be greater than first calculated.

Passing, and sticking to, a tight 1995 budget has been a key condition for Moscow winning the standby loan, which will be used to plug the deficit.

IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus, in Moscow last week to sign an agreement on the loan, gave his blessing to the government's economic programme. He said he was sure the IMF board would give final approval for the loan in early April.

First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais said the key task now was to ensure the budget was met.

He said few people had initially believed the budget would be passed or would win the international community's backing.

"But the budget has been approved, the IMF has given its vote of confidence and inflation is falling," he said.

He said inflation, which slipped to a monthly 11 per cent in February from 17.8 per cent in January, would fall further in March.

Balladur warns of crisis without stability of world's major currencies

PARIS (R) — The world economy is courting disaster if major states fail to stabilise their currencies. French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur warned Tuesday.

But speaking after a month in which the U.S. dollar has plunged dramatically, throwing Europe's own currencies into disarray, the conservative presidential candidate told Reuters in an interview that he was "preaching in the wilderness."

He called for a system of deposit payments that dealers would have to put up when making currency trades in order to cool the frantic pace of short-term international money flows.

He preferred this to his Socialist rival Lionel Jospin's suggestion of a global tax on capital movements.

Mr. Balladur also urged a new common world currency standard along the lines of the gold standard abandoned in 1971 when the post-war Bretton Woods pegged-

currency system broke down.

"In a world which moves around hundreds of billions of dollars every day by computer, could we not invent rules of market organisation that would make speculative gains less easy?" Mr. Balladur said.

But asked if he believed the recent turmoil on world currency markets would bring changes, Mr. Balladur was pessimistic.

"Every time there's trouble people say it's very serious, we have to do something about it. And then life goes on, they say it wasn't so serious, we survived, and they wait for the next shock," he said.

"For me, my fear and my obsession is that one day the shock will be so severe that the prosperity of the world would suffer badly. So I would prefer that we prepare for the worst. But I am alone in this opinion," he added.

U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan has suggested return to the gold standard, but few politicians have been prepared to go along with that. Mr. Balladur said the standard could also be provided by a basket of currencies, along the lines of the European Currency Unit (ECU).

But he conceded France, which has been urging a return to a more managed currency system for years and will do so again at June's Group of Seven summit in Halifax, Canada, had difficulty in getting its message across.

"It doesn't always get a good press because people say the French are always dirigistes," Mr. Balladur said.

One bright spot in the outlook, however, was the prospect of a single European currency that would rank with the dollar as a pivot of international commerce, even if this would not end wild fluctuations between the European and dollar zone.

Indian 'anti-poverty' budget boosts spending on welfare

NEW DELHI (AFP) — The Indian government boosted spending on public welfare, increased subsidies and lowered tariff barriers Wednesday in a budget mixing populism and reform with an eye on general elections next year.

"It's a budget with an anti-poverty emphasis," Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao told reporters after the budget was unveiled in parliament by Finance Minister Manmohan Singh. "It gives benefits to the lowest of the low."

Mr. Rao described it as a "budget of growth" and said there would be no backing away from the sweeping economic liberalisation he began after taking power in June 1991.

The fiscal 1995-96 (April-March) budget took a first step towards opening up the lucrative insurance sector to foreign firms and lowered import tariffs by 15 per cent to a peak rate of 50 per cent.

Mr. Singh, the architect of the radical free-market reforms ending four decades of protectionist policies, pledged to crack down hard on inflation in a budget bountiful to India's millions of rural poor.

The Bombay Stock Exchange, in a special post budget trading session, gave an initial thumbs-down to the

package as market expectations of corporate tax breaks were not fulfilled. The BSE index lost 50 points.

The budget increasing spending on health care, rural development and education follows a clutch of state election defeats for Rao's Congress (I) Party that have been blamed on voter disenchantment with economic reform.

Mr. Singh, facing charges that the reforms have benefited only the rich and done nothing for the poor, opened the government's coffers to fund generous public welfare programmes ahead of general elections due by mid-1996.

He said a million subsidised houses would be built, announced a modest old-age pension for the rural poor and set up a programme to provide maternity care for village women.

A programme to provide free lunches for village schoolchildren would be expanded. Impoverished low-caste citizens would get soft loans.

Bank credit for rural industries was increased and a subsidised group life insurance scheme set up for villagers. More than \$3 billion was earmarked for subsidies on food and fertilisers.

But such programmes were only short-term measures to alleviate poverty and in the

long run only economic growth can improve the standards of living, Mr. Singh said, stressing the need for continuing the reforms.

"The message is clear — the task of lifting the age-old burden of poverty in our society is daunting, but we are on the right track," Mr. Singh said.

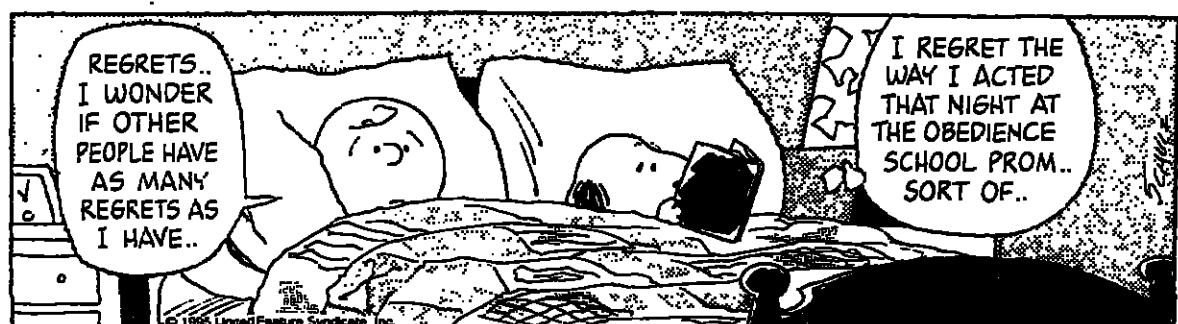
"We must persevere with our two-track strategy of accelerating growth, investment and modernisation on the one track and strengthening anti-poverty programmes on the other," he said.

In the first step towards opening up the lucrative insurance business to the private sector, the finance minister said a regulatory authority would be set up to govern competition in the industry when it ceases to be a state monopoly.

A five-year tax holiday was announced for investment in key infrastructure areas such as highways, bridges and airports, and duty cuts given on products ranging from polyester and paper to cosmetics and cold drinks.

Mr. Singh offered income tax exemption for people making less than 55,000 rupees (\$1,718) a year and pledged to rein in inflation, currently 11.5 per cent, considered high in a country where incomes are low.

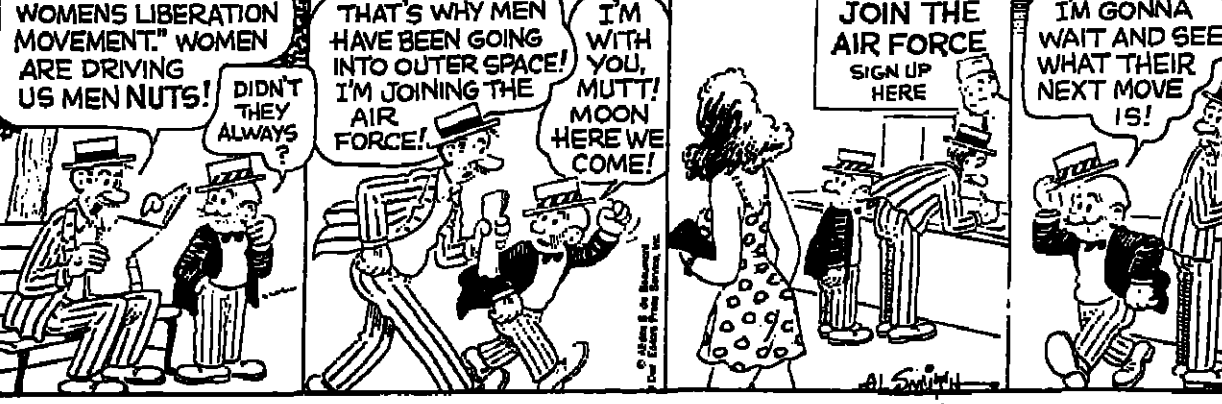
Peanuts



Andy Capp



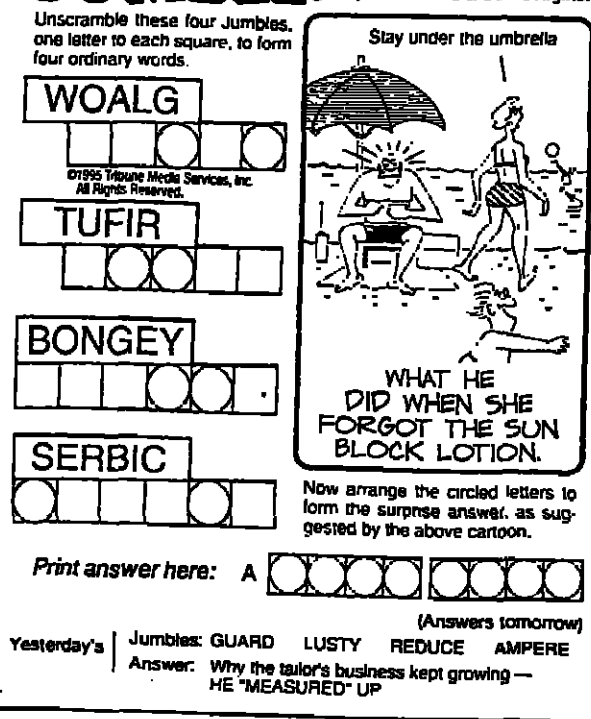
Mutt'n'Jeff



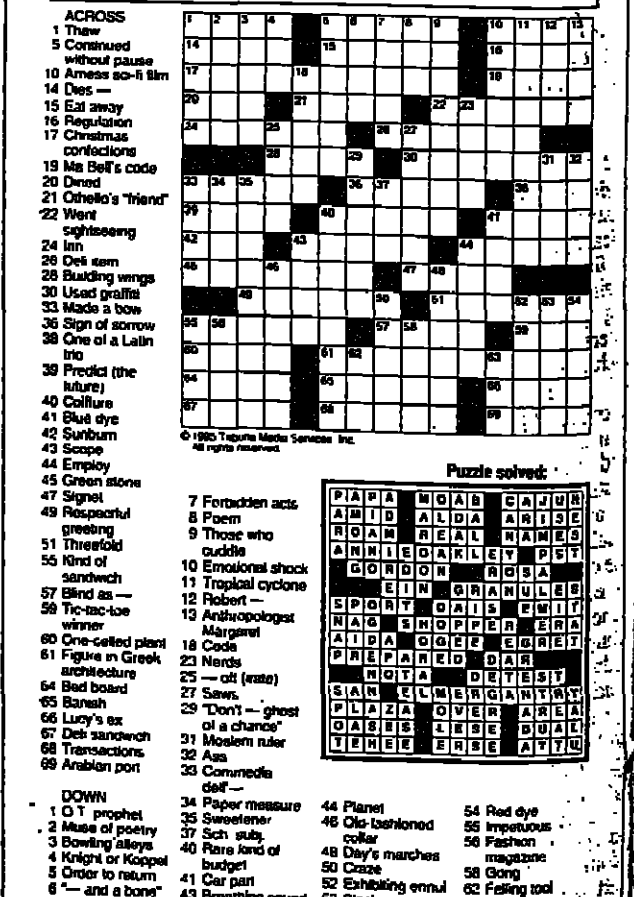
THE BETTER HALF



JUMBLE



THE Daily Crossword by Melvin Karwan



business daily beat
A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Defaulting on JD 10,000 loan costs 90-day jail

★ A COURT in Amman sentenced Antar Mahmoud Tahab Abu Sharbi to 90-day imprisonment for not repaying a JD 10,864 loan to the British Bank of the Middle East (Al Dostour).

★ THE ARAB Life and Accident Insurance Company posted JD 745,000 in net profits for fiscal 1994, down 3.9 per cent from 1993. The company's board of directors is recommending to the general assembly the distribution of JD 320,000, or 16 per cent in dividends, the same as in 1993. Profits from insurance operations amounted to JD 0.4 million compared to JD 0.27 in 1993 but the return on investments dropped by 31.6 per cent to JD 347,300. The company's total assets stood at JD 9.88 million at the end of 1994 (JD 10.5 million in '93) due to a decline in bank deposits from JD 5.7 million in 1993 to JD 4.53 in 1994. However, the total investment in shares, stocks and various credits increased to JD 3.8 million last year from JD 3.27 million in 1993. On the liability side, outstanding claims reserve shot up by 116 per cent from JD 1.52 million in 1993 to JD 3.28 million in 1994. The Housing Bank holds a 17.9 per cent stake in the company which is capitalised at JD 2 million but had a total equity of JD 2.76 million at the end of last year (Al Ra'i).

★ ROYAL JORDANIAN'S Alia Gateway Hotel scored its highest net profit in 1994. The amount was approximately JD 1.5 million. (Al Dostour)

★ IMPORTERS and traders of tyres would like to see customs reduced on new tyres after the government banned the importation of used tyres. They admit that prices of authentic tyres are high and point out that only the people who are capable or in great need are the ones buying new tyres. People with limited income are not happy with the ban on used tyres.

According to Khalaf Al Shura: "The decision to ban imports of used tyres is an unsuccessful decision because it does not serve the majority of the people who had put aside many essential things in order to buy a modest car that would serve them and help them endure life's difficulties." He hoped that the government would reconsider its decision that mostly hurts the ordinary man who, rather than filling his stomach with food, fills his car tank with fuel.

Another person, Suleiman Ali, says it will be better for an owner of a modest car to sell the car itself than pay "astronomical amounts" to buy new tyres (Al Aswaj).

★ CONSUMERS are complaining that despite a cut in customs duty, prices of electrical appliances are still high. A field survey showed three main reasons that are keeping prices high. First, the international rise in prices, second, the taxes and fees that the government imposes and which result in higher costs on the goods and, third, and most importantly, the weak purchasing power of the consumers and the general economic recession. The general manager of a clearing company explained that the reduction in customs was not much as it went down from 85 per cent to 50 per cent but, on the other hand, the sales tax was hiked to 11.9 per cent. As such, the calculation as become: The cost 50 per cent customs plus 15 per cent additional fees plus five per cent trade permits fees plus the sales tax (Al Dostour).

France opens inquiry into Credit Lyonnais

PARIS (R) — French legal authorities moved swiftly Wednesday to probe alleged wrongdoing at Credit Lyonnais after Prime Minister Edouard Balladur ordered an investigation into the state-owned bank's vast losses.

Economy Minister Edmond Alphandery said the Paris public prosecutor had begun a number of inquiries into possible wrongdoing at Credit Lyonnais which gorged on acquisitions and investments in the early 1990s to become Europe's largest bank.

"There has been embezzlement... this must be pursued by legal means. The public prosecutor has already opened a number of inquiries," Mr. Alphandery told France Inter Radio. He said the bank had a "hole" in its accounts of some 50 billion francs (\$9.96 billion), which sources said represented potential losses on asset sales.

Late Tuesday, the conservative prime minister, battling to regain his lead in the presidential elections, demanded a probe to finger those responsible for the hemorrhage of red ink. "All means will be taken to sanction those executives who may be identified," he pledged.

Sources said the bank will announce Friday its 1994 results which are expected to show that losses widened to a record 10 billion francs (\$1.99 billion) from last year's 6.9 billion.

The figures will be accompanied by the announcement of a second government rescue for the bank which will come on top of last year's 23.3 billion franc (\$4.64 billion) bailout. The plan is aimed at returning the bank to profit in 1995.

Under the bailout scheme, Credit Lyonnais will have off up to 140 billion francs (\$27.88 billion) of assets into a new firm to be guaranteed by the government which will sell them off as market conditions permit.

In return, the bank "will have to finance its past losses with its future profits," thus avoiding calling on taxpayers' funds, Mr. Alphandery said. Published reports have said the bank will be forced to repay a substantial portion of its profits to the state over the next 20 years.

Mindful of voter reaction, Mr. Balladur has been anxious to avoid using taxpayers' money to save the bank after the public uproar which greeted the first rescue.

The bailout which has brought complaints from other French banks that it will distort competition in the banking industry, got a tentative green light Tuesday from European competition Commissioner Karel van Miert after he met Mr. Alphandery.

Mr. Van Miert called the outline for restructuring the bank a "good approach" and final commission approval is expected soon.

The bank would not comment on the investigation but sources close to it said it would not interfere with its future plans.

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Al Ra'i, Jordan Times maintain high profitability

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The publishers of Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times will distribute 50 per cent dividend for fiscal 1994, company executives said Wednesday.

They said the Jordan Press Foundation Company Limited made a net profit of JD 1,611,276 for the year compared with JD 1,623,293 in 1993.

The slight decline in profits, despite an increase in revenues, was attributed to a more than 110 per cent increase in the international prices of newsprint since May 1994.

A tonne of newsprint now costs around \$1,100 compared with \$450 in May. The company was able to maintain its high profit level during 1994 only because the hike had hit new highs towards the end of the year.

Newspaper publishers have decided to increase the cost of newspapers and advertising charges with effect from April 1 to defray the increase in newsprint prices.

The final statement of accounts of the Jordan Press Foundation Company Limited, to be released at a general assembly meeting on March 28, showed that income from advertising was JD 5,701,744 compared with JD 5,373,444 in 1993.

Income from newspaper sales and subscription was JD 2,275,422 compared with JD 2,135,501 in 1993, while revenues from commercial printing services declined to JD 845,866 from J 1,006,629 last year.

In addition was JD 244,164 in other income.

In general terms, 63 per cent of the income came from advertising, 25 per cent from sales and subscription, nine per cent from commercial printing operations and three per cent from other sources.

The company, which has a capital of JD 2 million in

under way at a cost of JD 500,000.

Mahmoud Al Kayed chairs the board of directors of the company. The board includes Abed Iah Tabaa as vice-chairman and Mohammad Al Amad (director-general).

Other members of the board are: Ali Gharyeb (representing the Jordan Investment Corporation), Ramzi Muasher (representative of Business Bank), Ibrahim Abu Ragheb (representative of Yarmouk Insurance Company), and Walid Al Khatib, Bassam Rabadi and Fattallah Omrani (all representing the Social Security Corporation). Daoud Khatib, another board member representing the Social Security Corporation, died this week.

The Jordan Press Foundation employs nearly 400 people.

The company's shares were traded at around JD 12 last week.

According to the statement of accounts, the net worth of the company was put at JD 9,082,184 at the end of 1994 after depreciation, compared JD 8,470,994 the year before. Fixed assets of the company, which bought a JD 3.5 million printing machine and built new buildings last year, were worth JD 6,506,416.

A full computerisation of the printing and publishing operations of the company is

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under way at a cost of JD 500,000.

Bahrain and Oman link their bourses

MANAMA (R) — Bahrain and Oman signed an agreement Wednesday allowing cross-listing of companies on their stock exchanges, officials said.

"The agreement would be implemented from today," Bahrain Stock Exchange (BSE) Director Bawzi Hezad said.

The agreement, which a BSE statement said was the first of its kind in the Middle East, allows companies traded in each of the two exchanges to be listed on the other also.

The two exchanges have 110 companies listed between them with total market capitalisation of \$8.1 billion.

Mr. Hezad said Bahrain International Bank E.C. and Muscat-based Omani Cement Company would be the first to go on the joint list.

Wednesday's deal puts into force a preliminary agreement made by Oman and Bahrain in 1992, the first such link between members of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Muscat Securities Market Executive Director Mahmoud Jarwani, who signed the agreement with Mr. Hezad, said there were no immediate plans to link Oman's stock market with other states.

Oman this year approved rules to list foreign firms on its bourses Mr. Hezad said BSE was to complete rules by June to also list non-GCC shares, bonds and investment units.

There are 34 companies in the Bahraini bourse with a market capitalisation of 1.9 billion dinars (\$5 billion), the 76 firms registered in Oman have a capitalisation of 1.2 billion riyals (\$3.1 billion), Mr. Jarwani said.

The GCC, which also groups Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, has long-term plans to link the member countries' bourses.

GCC leaders decided in December to allow GCC citizens to own and trade shares in all six states. The rules apply to all traded firms except banks, exchange houses and insurance firms.

Some companies in GCC stock markets are open to investors outside the Gulf.

Shares in Saudi Arabia are traded by telephone and computer. The UAE and Qatar, where trading is now conducted by telephone, are setting up their first official bourses.

Mr. Jarwani said investors in Bahrain and Oman were to set up a \$3 million investment firm to boost trading in both countries.

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SAS orders new jets

STOCKHOLM (R) — Scandinavian airline SAS ordered 35 Boeing 737-600s for around 8.5 billion crowns (\$1.17 billion) Tuesday, snubbing long-time business partner McDonnell Douglas.

SAS said it would be the launch customer for the latest version of the Seattle aviation giant's Workhorse Jet — the most bought jet flying today — adding it had placed options on a further 35 planes.

"The decision marks the start of a gradual phasing out of the Fokker 28 and McDonnell Douglas DC-9 aircraft in the SAS fleet," the airline said in a statement.

Scandinavian Airlines System — half owned by the governments of Norway, Denmark and Sweden and half by private investors — said deliveries will start in 1998 and one jet a month will then be delivered.

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LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London Foreign Exchange and bullion markets Monday.

U.S. \$1.00 costs	1.4090/00	Canadian dollar	1.4040/50
	1.4040/50	Deutschemarks	1.5748/58
	1.5748/58	Dutch guilders	1.1720/30
	1.1720/30	Swiss francs	29.11/15
	29.11/15	Belgian francs	5.0185/35
	5.0185/35	French francs	1690.0/5.0
	1690.0/5.0	Italian lire	90.13/23
	90.13/23	Japanese yen	7.2775/75
	7.2775/75	Swedish crowns	6.2990/40
	6.2990/40	Norwegian crowns	5.6660/10
	5.6660/10	Danish crowns	\$1.5816/26
One sterling	\$1.5816/26		
One ounce of gold	\$382.60/383.10		

Kingdom's victorious basketball team returns home

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — "We were the talk of the town."

This is how Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) President Awad Haddad described Jordan's participation in the 15th Asian Junior Basketball Championship which concluded in Manila last Sunday.

Jordan's victorious Under-18 national team arrived back in Amman Wednesday morning after taking part in the 15-nation competition where they clinched third place and qualified to the World Championship due to be held in Greece in July.

The promising young group of players became the first Jordanian team to clinch an Asian bronze medal in a team sport enabling them to represent the continent in a world championship.

"We were dubbed the 'Cinderella' of the competition. We came from nowhere and ended up taking third place. Like all Jordanians, I am very proud," said Mr. Haddad.

When the team was first regrouped at the beginning of the year, the major task was how to best prepare them for the Asian competition.

The team practised hard and received the careful attention of the JBF who prepared a serious schedule of training camps in Amman and Syria.

The effort paid off. And the team passed the test with flying colours, making them well-known to all Jordanians who followed their results with great pride and astonishment.

Now the next big hurdle is how to best prepare for the World Championship in which 16 teams will be taking part.

"We are sure we will be able to cover the financial aspect," the JBF's Mr. Haddad Wednesday told the Jordan Times.

"However, we need a concerted effort of all parties in order to enable the players to participate as the championship coincides with university and Tawjihi exams," he added.

Mr. Haddad said he had explained this point to the Minister of Youth Awad Khleifat and hoped the matter would be settled in a positive manner in order to enable the team to participate.

"The results of this team are proof enough of their ability. Therefore I am very hopeful that we will receive sufficient sponsorship, even though many sponsors were disappointed lately and did not fulfill their pledges to the JBF," Mr.



JBF officials and the U-18 team with Minister of Youth Awad Khleifat shortly after their arrival in Amman



The Kingdom's U-18 team (right) on the winners' podium in Manila with champions South Korea and runners-up China. Haddad said alluding to the fact that the federation lost JD 10,000 from car companies who had sponsored the All-Star tournament but paid half the promised

amount when Jordan Television did not air the matches as previously agreed with the JBF.

"I find it strange that Jordan Television does not have a more positive attitude. After all we are talking about a national team here," he added.

As a result of the strained relationship with the JBF, JTV did not cover the daily results of the U-18 except on the sports programme (see separate story)

The results of the team came as follows:
First round

Jordan vs. Hong Kong 71-24
Jordan vs. Singapore 88-35
South Korea vs. Jordan 75-61

Quarterfinals

Jordan vs. Philippines 72-71
Jordan vs. Japan 73-56
China vs. Jordan 88-49

Semifinals

South Korea vs. Jordan 69-51

3rd place match

Jordan vs. Thailand 62-56

The team includes Zeid Alkhas, Ma'an Odeh, Ashraf Samarah, Mahmoud Sha'ban, Samer Nino, Yanal Bisheh, Ihab Msih, Raed Ghosheh, Adel Amari, Ramzi Ghneim, Fadi Al Saqqa and Seif Al Lada'a.

Malone boosts Jazz over Magic; Rockets win

ORLANDO (AP) — Karl Malone scored 27 points and John Stockton keyed a 15-3 spurt in the last three minutes Tuesday night as the Utah Jazz beat the Orlando Magic 107-95 for its ninth consecutive victory.

The loss stopped Orlando's 11-game home winning streak and was only the Magic's second at Orlando Arena in 34 games this season.

Malone scored 19 of his points in the second half, while Stockton just missed a

triple double with 18 points, 18 assists and eight rebounds. Jeff Hornekey added 17 points.

Shaquille O'Neal led Orlando with 29 points and 11 rebounds. Antwan Hardaway added 24 points and Nick Anderson 17 for Orlando, whose only other loss at home came against the Seattle SuperSonics.

Rockets 136, 76ers 107: Clyde Drexler scored 26 points to lead the Rockets' biggest offensive output of the season as Houston defeated the

Philadelphia 76ers.

The defending NBA champions had eight players score in double figures as they extended their winning streak to three games and overcame a 50-point performance by the 76ers' Dana Barros.

Barros topped his career high of 41 points and made 21 of 26 field goals, including six of eight from 3-point range. Bulls 106, Bulls 93: Scottie Pippen scored 30 points and keyed a third-quarter surge that carried the streaking Chicago Bulls past the

Washington Bullets.

Pippen, Chicago's main scoring threat as long as Michael Jordan remains inactive, made 12 of 17 shots. He also had 10 rebounds and six assists to help the Bulls notch their fourth win in five games.

Washington's Gheorge Muresan scored 21, matching his career high, and grabbed 14 rebounds. Chris Webber had 18 points for the Bulls, who were attempting to win a first straight game for the first time in 14 months. Knicks 94, Nuggets 74: Patrick Ewing, showing no ill effects from a sprained ankle, scored 21 points and Charles Oakley had 17 rebounds as the New York Knicks breezed to a victory over the Denver Nuggets.

Bucks 99, Hornets 86: Glenn Robinson scored 27 points and Vin Baker had 12 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists as the Milwaukee Bucks beat Charlotte.

It was the Bucks' first victory over the Hornets this season after losing the first four games. Charlotte, which leads the Central Division, lost its second game in as many nights.

Charlotte was led by Alonzo Mourning with 18 points and 14 rebounds, and Dell Curry had 17 points.

Spurs 115, Timberwolves 109: David Robinson had 24 points and 10 rebounds as the San Antonio Spurs shot 61 per cent in a win over the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Tapie denies match-fixing

VALENCIENNES (AFP) — Bernard Tapie denied here Tuesday any involvement in an alleged attempt to fix a French first division football match two years ago.

The former socialist government minister, who faces up to three years' jail if found guilty, denied allegations by his former associate Jean-Pierre Bernes that he had hatched a plan to fix the match between Marseille and Valenciennes.

Victory would have handed Marseille their fifth French championship in a row, six days before a European Cup final against AC Milan.

The former Marseille president told the court: "Yes, I wanted to win the Valenciennes match. Yes, I wanted no injuries."

"Yes, I wanted to be champion of France. No, that does not add up to me wanting to fix the match."

Bernes, the 38-year-old former Marseille general manager, alleged on the opening day of the trial on Monday that Tapie and Marseille player Jean-Jacques Eydelie had hatched the plot to bribe three Valenciennes players to allow Marseille to win the match.

"I think this win shows my Kitzbuhel double was not a flash in the pan," he added. Lasse Kjus of Norway, fastest over the top of the course, was third in 1:53.92. Peter Rzezhak of Austria was fourth in 1:53.96 and compatriot Patrick Ortlieb, the 1992 Olympic champion looking for his first win this season, finished fifth in 1:53.97.

Kristian Ghedina of Italy, whose time of 1min 54.03 stood up until Ortlieb nine places after him in 10th start position, had been on course for the downhill title until Alphonse swept down.

Alphonse's downhill title

French win crowns Tomba

BORMIO, Italy (AFP) — Luc Alphand, who had never won before, won the Kitzbuhel Double in January, became the first Frenchman since Jean-Claude Killy in 1967 to win the World Cup downhill title here on Wednesday.

His third win in the season's last and most exciting downhill also guaranteed Alberto Tomba his first World Cup championship in 10 years on the circuit.

Austrian-born Marc Girardelli of Luxembourg had needed to win all four races at these World Cup finals to overhaul Tomba.

Alphonse, 29, timed 1min 53.50sec for the 3,270 metre course, to finish 0.29sec ahead of AJ Kitt of the United States.

"I was not so confident the last two weeks but when I came here I said to myself this is my last chance and I will have to try very hard," Alphand said.

"I think this win shows my Kitzbuhel double was not a flash in the pan," he added.

Lasse Kjus of Norway, fastest over the top of the course, was third in 1:53.92. Peter Rzezhak of Austria was fourth in 1:53.96 and compatriot Patrick Ortlieb, the 1992 Olympic champion looking for his first win this season, finished fifth in 1:53.97.

Kristian Ghedina of Italy, whose time of 1min 54.03 stood up until Ortlieb nine places after him in 10th start position, had been on course for the downhill title until Alphonse swept down.

Alphonse's downhill title

owed a little to the International Ski Federation overturning Kitt's win at Aspen two weeks ago because poor visibility meant only 31 of the 68 competitors could race.

The French protested because Kitt's win would have cost Alphand his place in the downhill standings.

Only Slovenia's Jure Kosir had a mathematical chance of overtaking Tomba but he would have to win Thursday's super giant slalom — an event he does not ski — and then the giant slalom and slalom with Tomba finishing out of the points each time.

Tomba is the first slalom gate-racer since Ingemar Stenmark to win the men's overall title.

The triple Olympic champion, whose winning streak of 10 races came to an end in Japan last month, had been prepared to ski his first super giant slalom for years to win his first World Cup.

The 28-year-old may also postpone his retirement in an attempt to win an elusive world title.

He had said he would call it a day after this world championships in Sierra Nevada but the fickle weather that has disrupted the season forced the Spanish organisers to postpone the event until next year.

Stenmark's 86 World Cup wins look unbeatable but Tomba's 43 race wins have surpassed Girardelli's tally. The Luxembourg skier's grand total of 45 includes 10 wins at combined, which is effectively a paper race adding results from nominated downhill and slaloms.

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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q.1—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
4♠ ♠AQ863 ♠9762 ♠42
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1♠ Pass 2♠ Pass
2♥ Pass 3♥ Pass
What do you bid now?
A.—Unless partner has a perfect holding, the light of the hand is at most game. Since we are bidding two spades to show the stopper, but most would jump to four diamonds, even though that bypasses three no trump. We think three diamonds is an underbid.

Q.2—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
4♠ ♠AQ863 ♠AQ863 ♠42
Your right-hand opponent opens the bidding with one diamond. What action do you take?
A.—We would be much more excited about this hand had our minor-suit holdings been reversed. While it might produce slam, you cannot even guarantee game if partner has the wrong values. Be satisfied with four hearts—and hope you make it.

Q.3—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
4♠ ♠AQ863 ♠AQ863 ♠42
The bidding has proceeded:
South West North East
1♠ Pass 1♠ Pass
2♠ Pass 2♠ Pass
What do you bid now?
A.—Since you can't pass, nor bid no trump without a club stopper, you are limited to two choices—three diamonds or two spades. Rather than rebid your shabby six-card minor, we would take a preference to partner's five-card or longer major. Bid two spades.

Q.4—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
4♠ ♠AQ863 ♠AQ863 ♠42
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1♠ Pass 2♠ Pass
2♥ Pass 3♥ Pass
What do you bid now?
A.—No question, your best shot for game, or slam for that matter, appears to be in spades. There is available a bid that shows a solid suit and no side-suit values—jump to four spades. Make it. Partner will know whether he has the right hand for a move.

Cheltenham Cup

Novice Alderbrook lands Champion Hurdle

TENHAM, England — Brilliant novice Alderbrook, an 11-2 chance having won his third race over hurdles on Tuesday, landed the Champion Hurdle by five lengths from the field in the 4-1 joint victory.

The victory was rich compensation for Irish jockey Williamson who lost on last year's Champion Hurdle winner Flakie after being banned for careless riding.

Hitting the front up the Cheltenham hill to hurdle crown country on Tuesday, Williamson said: "I never knew we were going to get at any stage. It was a real surprise."

Land Afar, strongly fancied when he topped over in last year's Champion Hurdle, did so again at the sixth flight.

The Irish challenger Danoli, the other joint favourite, looked up on the outside looking menacing for a while.

But it was clear before they even swung into the straight that Williamson just had to press the button.

He said: "He is some machine. You have really got to hand it to him. I hope we can do the same next year."

Alderbrook is a group race winner on the flat with a victory at Longchamp to his credit.

Alderbrook, ridden by Williamson with all the cheeky know-how of a Lester Piggott derby winner, never put a foot wrong and was kept handily in mid-division until delivering his challenge at the last flight.

The plucky mare Mysliv led one of the best Champion Hurdle fields for years over the first six hurdles, closely followed by Bold Boss and Land Afar.

The Irish challenger Danoli, the other joint favourite, looked up on the outside looking menacing for a while.

But it was clear before they even swung into the straight that Williamson just had to press the button.

He won going away from Large Action, the mount of Jamie Osborne, with Danoli, ridden by Charlie Swan, a further two lengths away.

It was a dream start to the meeting for Williamson, who had never had a winner before at the National Hunt festival.

He is now in the enviable position of riding the Cheltenham Gold Cup favourite Master Oats in the big race on Thursday.

Alderbrook was the second classiest flat racing recruit to capture the hurdling crown in the last three years — Royal Gait won in only his fourth race over hurdles.

The Irish, who invade Cheltenham en-masse for the greatest jumping meeting of the year, twice raised the rafters in the first hour of competition.

The 25-1 chance tourist attraction gave trainer Willie Mullins his first winner at Cheltenham in the Supreme Novices Hurdle, the opening race.

Then Klairon Davis, ridden by Francis Woods, won a thrilling battle with Sound

Man, the mount of Swan, to land the Arkle Challenge Trophy.

Top steeplechaser dead

Top steeplechaser Raymylette, who had been a hope for the Cheltenham Gold Cup, has died.

The horse, owned by Lady Madeleine Lloyd Webber, died on Monday during an operation for intestinal problems.

Trainer Nicky Henderson said on Tuesday: "A decision was made to operate and surgery was carried out by our own vet James Maine together with professor Edwards from Liverpool University but there was regrettably no more they could do for him."

Raymylette leapt to prominence in Gold Cup betting following his successes in Ascot's first National Bank Chase and Betterware Cup. Henderson described Raymylette as "potentially the best staying chaser that I have had the privilege of training."

English soccer hit by darkest season

PARIS (AFP) — The rigging scandal involving Grobbelaar and her Premiership play-off potentially the most in a series of crises to engulf English football this season.

Southampton goal was among five protested on Tuesday in action with a police incursion into an alleged fix of match-fixing corner, said to involve Farthing syndicates.

London goalkeeper Segers, the Aston Villa John Fashanu, his girlfriend and Malaysian woman are also being investigated.

English football likes to itself on the honest vigour of its players and integrity of its institutions. Events of the last four years represent a massive threat to that image.

Corruption, sleaze, scandal, allegations, counter-

allegations, assaults, drugs, riots, fans attacking referees or a player biting the nose of a reporter or spitting in the face of a fan — English football has the lot.

The problems began in November when Grobbelaar emerged at the centre of match-fixing allegations. The FA and police both announced investigations and four months later Hampshire police swooped to make five arrests.

Shortly afterwards, Arsenal striker Paul Merson admitted to cocaine, alcohol and drug addiction.

In January Eric Cantona attacked an abusive Crystal Palace fan following his dismissal during Manchester United's 1-1 draw at Selhurst Park. The Frenchman was suspended by United until the end of the season and fined two weeks' wages. He was later banned until October 1995, fined £10,000 by the FA, and charged with

common assault by the police. FIFA made the ban worldwide.

Much worse was to follow when rioting right-wing extremists forced the abandonment of England's friendly against the Republic of Ireland in Dublin.

Arsenal sacked manager George Graham after a Premier League inquiry alleged he received £25,000 pounds following the transfers of John Jensen and Pal Lyderon to Highbury. The FA charged Graham with misconduct two weeks later.

A terrible month for English football came to an end with Belgian police deporting more than 800 people with varying degrees of justification before and after Chelsea's European Cup Winners' Cup quarter-final first leg in Brussels.

But it was still off the field scandals rather than football

that continued to hit the headlines.

Earlier this month, five-million-pound-rated striker Chris Armstrong was left out of Crystal Palace side for four games on FA instructions after testing positive for cannabis.

Ten days ago, Manchester United midfielder Paul Ince was charged with common assault by police for attacking a Crystal Palace fan on January 25 following the Cantona incident at Selhurst Park. Both he and Cantona are due to appear in court on March 23.

Last Monday Chelsea skipper Dennis Wise was released on bail pending his appeal against a three-month prison sentence for an assault on a taxi driver and criminal damage to the taxi.

Six weeks of the current season remain. Given current averages, English football should brace itself for at least another five scandals.

Germany, Italy locked in UEFA Cup power struggle

PARIS (AFP) — The UEFA Cup semi-finals on Tuesday served up an intriguing struggle between Italy and Germany — the strongest nations in the history of European football.

Italy's Parma and Juventus join Germany's Borussia Dortmund and Bayer Leverkusen in Friday's semi-final draw.

Juventus beat Eintracht Frankfurt 3-0 for a 4-1 aggregate win. Parma drew 0-0 at Odense (1-0). Bayer Leverkusen drew 0-0 at Nantes (5-1), and Dortmund beat Lazio 2-0 (2-1).

And in the Cup Winners' Cup, Chelsea defied the odds of their captain to beat FC Bruges 2-0 in London for a 2-1 aggregate win and a place in the last four.

Chelsea skipper Dennis Wise was jailed for three months on Monday for assaulting a taxi driver.

Borussia Dortmund's previous best challenge for a UEFA Cup title will be at the back of their minds.

In May 1993, Juventus humiliated Dortmund 6-1 on aggregate in the final of this same competition in an emphatic statement of Italy's domination. The same year, Parma won the Cup Winners' Cup and Milan lost in the European Cup final.

But following Italian Clubs' financial problems since then, many German stars have returned home. Italian presidents now look to cheaper, markets, such as Portugal, for foreign replacements.

Since that defeat, Matthias Sammer, Karlheinz Riedle, Stefan Reuter, and Andreas Moller have come back to bolster Dortmund's European campaigns.

Eintracht Frankfurt vice-president Bernd Holzenbein, who won the World Cup as a player in 1974, believes a wind of change is in the air. "The Bundesliga is beginning to compete on an equal basis with the Serie A," he said.

Borussia Dortmund's Karlheinz Riedle scored the dramatic late winner for Dortmund to foil his former club Lazio.

Riedle's last minute goal from a free-kick earned Dortmund a 2-0 win on the night. Earlier Swiss striker Stephane Chapuisat scored an 11th minute penalty after a foul on Riedle.

Riedle's goal came just a minute after the sending off of Argentina's Jose Chamot, the Lazio libero.

A late goal flourish earned Juventus a 3-0 victory over Eintracht Frankfurt and a 4-1 aggregate win for a place in

the last four on May 4 and 18.

Juventus kept up their tradition of European success with goals by Antonio Conte, Fabrizio Ravanelli, and Alessandro Del Piero.

Conte received a pass from Alessandro Del Piero, set up by Didier Deschamps, and put Juventus into a 77th minute lead.

Ravanelli hit the second with a superb left foot shot two minutes before time, and an unmarked Del Piero grabbed the third a minute later.

Bayer Leverkusen, the 1988 UEFA Cup champions, went through 5-1 on aggregate following a 0-0 draw in France.

Nantes, to their credit, worked hard to claw their way back into the tie after a 5-1 defeat from the first leg. But Nantes' task was always an uphill struggle. Only three clubs in the history of European competitions have won a tie after a four-goal deficit from an away first leg.

In the first 10 minutes, moments after skipper Japhet N'Doram had a great scoring chance, Eric Decroix had the ball in the net from a corner. But the goal was disallowed for a foul on keeper Rudiger Vollbrecht.

David Garcion, surprise call-up for suspended Reynald Pedros, set up Nicolas Quecdec 10 minutes before

the interval. But Quecdec put the ball wide.

Problems for Nantes' keepers continued as second-choice Dominique Casagrande was substituted with a shoulder injury. Fourth-choice keeper Jean-Louis Garcia, who played in the first leg, came on.

First-choice David Marraud is out all season after rupturing knee ligaments, and third-choice Eric Lousquarn is out with a head injury.

Nantes kept pushing forward, particularly in the last 15 minutes, but could not find the net.

Italy's Parma reached the semi-final after a 0-0 goalless draw at Denmark's Odense.

The 1992/93 Cup Winners' Cup champions and last season's losing finalists, can now claim success in another European competition following this 1-0 aggregate victory.

But it was the Danes, trying to capitalise on the absence of suspended Colombian Faustino Asprilla, who had the best chance of the match.

Meanwhile Striker Mark Stein inspired Chelsea to a guisy Cup Winners' Cup comeback against FC Bruges to earn the injury-plagued Londoners a place in the semi-finals.

Johnson blames white campaign for his disgrace

KINGSTON, Jamaica (R) — Disgraced Jamaica-born Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson was reported on Tuesday as saying he had been banned from world athletics because of a "campaign by white people."

Johnson, in Jamaica to work on a self-sponsored documentary on his life, was reported by the Jamaica Observer newspaper as saying his life ban was planned by whites who were campaigning to crush black sports stars.

He cited former heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson, who is nearing the end of a jail

sentence for rape, as another who had suffered at the hands of whites.

"I was getting too powerful as a black athlete. Every time a black man tries to succeed in life they try to put him down. Black guys are making some good money and the white people don't want to see them succeed. Mike Tyson is another good example."

The 33-year-old Johnson was banned for life in 1993 after testing positive for banned drugs for a second time. He first tested positive at the Seoul Olympics in 1988 after crossing the finish line first in the 100 metres final.

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- Effective 26th. March 1995, Jordanian nationals who apply for an entry visa to one of the above mentioned countries for a short stay (a period not exceeding ninety days), will obtain a visa, valid for the whole Schengen area. The total duration of a stay, or of several stays, is limited to three months per semester in the above mentioned Schengen area. (Italy and Greece will join the Schengen convention procedure later).

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- The Schengen agreement signifies real progress with regard to the free circulation of persons. Of course, a foreigner with a valid residence permit, issued by one of the Schengen-countries, will be authorised to leave and to re-enter the Schengen area without having to apply for a new visa, on condition however that he possesses, besides the afore-mentioned residence permit, a valid national travel document (passport). Likewise, a foreigner in possession of a valid residence permit, issued by one of the Schengen-countries, together with a valid travel document, may stay for a maximum-duration of three months per semester in all the other Schengen countries, without a prior visa request from these countries.
- The visa application has to be addressed to the competent consular service in the following manner:
 - If the applicant wishes to travel to one country only, he will have to apply for the visa from the authorities of that specific country.
 - If the applicant intends to visit several countries, he has to apply to the authorities of the country of his main destination, mentioning the purpose of his visit.
 - If the main destination cannot be determined, the competent Schengen-country to issue the visa, will be the one first entered by the traveller.
- The application for a visa does not automatically guarantee a favourable response. The purpose of the voyage cannot, in principle, be modified afterwards.
- The documents required for obtaining a visa are the same as before. Further documents might be required in specific cases.
- A visa for a long duration remains subject to the national regulations of the country of destination. Such a visa has to be applied for through the consular authorities of the concerned country. A visa required for the French Overseas Departments and Territories has to be applied for at the competent French consular representation.
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Clinton move seen to have dealt severe blow to Iran

TEHRAN (Agencies) — The decision by U.S. President Bill Clinton to ban U.S. companies from developing Iran's oil and gas reserves has dealt a serious blow to Tehran's efforts to revive its economy, Western experts said Wednesday.

The U.S. oil firm Conoco announced late Tuesday it was scrapping a \$1-billion contract with Iran after Mr. Clinton signed an executive order banning such deals with Tehran.

Iran announced the deal was signed in the Netherlands on March 5 between Conoco and the Iranian National Oil Company (INOC) to develop the two fields of Sirri A and E.

One expert warned Wednesday that a Washington ban on U.S. companies working with Iran could have "serious consequences in the medium term" although in the short term the cancellation of the Conoco contract is unlikely to affect the country's oil situation.

But it could embarrass Iranian leaders, among them President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who have argued that the Islamic republic should have more open economic ties with the United States, political analysts said.

Diplomatic ties between the two countries have been severed since 1980 after Iranian students stormed the U.S. embassy in 1979 and took staff hostage.

Hardliners could now seize the opportunity to press home their argument that there is no other way except confrontation with "the

Great Satan," the United States, they argued.

Iran's oil production capacity has dropped in recent months and Tehran, incapable of financing the exploitation of new oil deposits alone, is urgently in need of foreign investment.

"Iran is finding it more and more difficult to get materials to maintain its wells and production is falling," the foreign oil expert said.

A two-year financial crisis has left Iran with short and medium term debts of more than \$30 billion.

Although Iranian officials say that oil production is around 4.2 million barrels per day (bpd), experts believe the true figure is nearer 3.6 and 3.8 million bpd.

The extra 120,000 bpd which would have been produced from the Sirri fields within three years would have made a difference, even more so as under the deal INOC would have not had to spend a dollar.

Iran said it was hoping to earn \$12.5 billion from the deal in oil revenues and about 750 million dollars in gas sales.

The Iranian opposition hailed the decision by Mr. Clinton.

"The move is imperative in defending human rights and civilisation vis-a-vis the most abominable dictatorship in the contemporary world," the exiled National Council of Resistance of Iran said in a statement received in Cyprus.

'Arms smuggling'

Iran is using a network of smuggling points throughout

Europe, Russia and Central Asia to acquire technology that could help give it nuclear weapons in five years, the New York Times reported Wednesday.

Weapons parts and nuclear technology are broken into such small components that they are not easily recognisable if they are spotted moving through the various smuggling points, the Times said.

"It is almost impossible to trace the material being smuggled out by the Iranians," said a senior German intelligence official the newspaper did not identify.

"Unless you know exactly what type of technology they are trying to build, the smugglers can collect various parts from various sources that mask the Iranians' intent."

Iranian officials deny they are trying to build a nuclear arsenal. The country has signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and Iran's foreign minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, has called for all nuclear weapons programmes in the Middle East to be disclosed.

But the intelligence officials told the Times Iran's effort to acquire nuclear weapons technology mirrors Iraq's attempt to build a nuclear bomb over the last 15 years.

Despite an embargo imposed by the West, they said the materials are carried on small planes that land on airstrips in Poland and possibly other Eastern European countries, often by way of Brussels and Vienna. From there the materials are loaded onto cargo planes bound for Iran, the intelligence officials said.



Prime Minister Shari' Zeid Ben Shaker on Wednesday holds talks with British Prime Minister John Major (photo by Yousef Al

British delegation briefed on Jordan economy, opportunities TCC, RJ, APC and JEA to be privatised, finance minister says

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The government intends to privatise the Telecommunications Corporation (TCC), Royal Jordanian (RJ), the Arab Potash Company (APC) and the Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA), Finance Minister Basel Jarrah said Wednesday.

While the government had indicated its plans to privatise the TCC and RJ, it was the first time that the APC and JEA were mentioned by a senior government official as entities slated for privatisation.

A restructuring of the administration of the TCC is under way ahead of commercialising the monopoly in the Kingdom's telecommunications sector. Commercialisation of the entity is the first step towards privatisation.

A similar process is under way also at RJ after studies recommended that the best means to tackle the debt problems of the airline was to raise its capital and privatise it.

A British consultancy firm has completed a study on commercialising the JEA. According to plans unveiled until Wednesday, the authority was expected to be registered as a commercial entity under the companies law but no indications were given of any plan to privatise it.

The APC is Jordan's first venture to exploit minerals in the Dead Sea. It is estimated

that it would need more than \$3 billion in investment to exploit the full potential of the mineral wealth of the Dead Sea.

The government's privatisation intentions came during a briefing Mr. Jarrah presented to a visiting British trade delegation headed by Trade Minister Richard Needham at the Forte Grand Hotel Wednesday morning.

Details were not immediately available on how the government intended to proceed with the privatisation drive or the timing of the moves.

In his briefing, which was also attended by Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) Governor Mohammad Nabulsi, Mr. Jarrah outlined the Kingdom's general economic policies and the restructuring programme under way in coordination with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and sectoral development programmes implemented in coordination with the World Bank.

Despite the difficulties it faced during the late 80s and early 90s, Jordan registered significant economic growth in the past years, Mr. Jarrah noted.

The government is devoted to ensuring continued economic growth and reducing expenditure as well as achieving administrative efficiency, the minister told the delegation.

Mr. Jarrah also briefly reviewed the problems Jordan is facing as a result of the

international sanctions against its one-time largest trade partner, Iraq, and the measures adopted by the government to compensate for the losses incurred in this respect.

The finance minister said Jordan's exports grew by 15 per cent during 1994 while its imports went down by four per cent.

The general sales tax that the government introduced last year is an important part of the economic planning of the Kingdom, the minister said.

Mr. Jarrah also outlined the measures adopted by the government to encourage foreign investments. He said one of the key pieces in the strategy was to treat foreign and local investments on an equal footing, offering the same incentives — customs and income tax exemptions etc. — and facilities to both.

The finance minister specifically cited tourism and hotels as areas where foreign investments were very welcome and lucrative.

Dr. Nabulsi presented the delegation with a briefing on the monetary situation in Jordan with a review of the economic restructuring programme which has stabilised the economy and currency.

The CBJ governor also outlined Jordan's efforts to address its foreign debts burden and noted in this context that Britain, Germany and France — all members of the European Union — had ex-

(Continued on page 7)

More blood shed in Istanbul violence

ISTANBUL (Agencies) — Up to four people died and 25 were wounded in new clashes here Wednesday between Muslim Alawite protesters and police as pressure mounted on Turkey's interior minister and on Istanbul's law-and-order chief to resign.

The demonstrators were protesting against an automatic weapons attack against an Alawite district by unidentified gunmen on the western bank of the Bosphorus Sunday night.

The Anatolia news agency said at least one person was killed and 25 were hurt in the latest outbreak of violence in the Umraniye district on the eastern bank of the Bosphorus.

Two private television networks put the toll at between two and four dead. The ATV network said four people died and 10 were injured while Interstar said two were killed and several hurt.

On Sunday three people were killed in the shooting in the Gazi district, home to members of the moderate Alawite community.

A further 20 people were killed and more than 100 wounded in protests until late Tuesday.

A woman died from serious burns late Tuesday after demonstrators threw a firebomb at her car for no apparent reason.

In Gazi where five victims were to be buried Wednesday tensions rose again in the afternoon.

Pressure also mounted Wednesday on Turkey's interior minister and on Istanbul's law-and-order chief to resign after Sunday's sectarian machine-gun attack on cafes frequented by members of the Alawite Muslim minority.

Violent demonstrations followed the attack and on Tuesday the protests spread from Istanbul to several other cities, including the capital Ankara, where 30 people were injured in clashes with police.

"They want a scapegoat," the centre-left Cumhuriyet daily wrote Wednesday accusing the government of failing to act on interior violence.

Two parliamentary deputies of Prime Minister Tansu Ciller's right-wing True Path party called on Interior Minister Nihat Metin to resign.

(Continued on page 7)

Iraqi paper urges sanctions deadline

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq's most influential newspaper on Wednesday urged the government to set a deadline for having U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait eased or lifted by diplomatic means.

"The matter effectively requires the putting of a red line with a timetable for the process of continuing with diplomatic negotiations," said the daily owned by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son, Uday.

The front-page editorial signed Abu Sarhan, widely believed to be Uday's nom de plume, followed Monday's U.N. Security Council decision to leave the trade sanctions intact.

"The latest review of the Security Council... regarding the lifting of the embargo is worse than the previous one," it said. "Anyone reading the latest review will find that not a single Security Council member spoke or even thought of discussing one of the aspects (leading to) the lifting of the embargo."

Babel and Uday have repeatedly attacked Iraq's foreign policy, saying it gave everything and got nothing in re-

turn. The newspaper said Iraq had been "retreating" since 1991, when a U.S.-led allied force ejected its troops from Kuwait.

"The Americans have greedy intentions towards Iraq. And this has become clear," it said. The editorial said Baghdad had no control over the Kurdish north of Iraq and was losing diplomatically "a great number of people, countries and alliances."

It said Baghdad would also have to face what it called "the covetous intentions and the baring of teeth by many wolves and renegades calling themselves opposition in northern Iraq."

The paper said that at a time when "provocations by America's dwarves (Iraqi opposition groups) have started to rise," Rolf Ekeus, chairman of the U.N. Special Commission on Disarming Iraq, and his inspectors were demanding "more and more."

Fighting erupted this month between government troops and opposition forces in northern Iraq and the

(Continued on page 7)

Talibans pushed back

KABUL (Agencies) — Afghanistan's emergent Taliban student militia overran a pro-government base west of Kabul in a lightning attack on Wednesday but were later pushed back in a counter-attack, a government commander said.

In a move to fight their way back into the capital, the Taliban took just 30 minutes to capture the Qala-Hyder base on the western entrance to the city, commander Daigul Khan told reporters.

But he said the government military command brought to the front line some of its most experienced fighters from 100th division who pushed the Taliban back into the hills about three kilometres further west after an eight-hour battle.

"They came like a nightmare out of the black," Mr. Khan said of the Taliban assault at about 8 a.m. (0330 GMT) on the base of commander Haji Shiralam of the Ittehad-e-Islami faction, a partner in President Burhanuddin Rabbani's coalition.

"We have finished them here," Mr. Khan said of the Taliban's first attempt to force its way into Kabul after government forces drove it from its newly occupied foothold in the Karte Seh district of western Kabul last Saturday.

Crashing rockets sent up clouds of smoke in the hills south of Kabul as President Burhanuddin Rabbani's forces tried to push towards the Taliban's main base in Charasyab, 25 kilometres outside of Kabul.

Also, rockets slammed into civilian areas of Kabul, and several hit an outdoor market. The rockets were fired from positions held by the Taliban. There was no immediate word on casualties.

The president's forces have scored big gains in the past week and now control all of Kabul city. A number of groups are on the outskirts, the most powerful of which is the Taliban.

The latest fighting has undermined a United Nations peace plan that calls for Mr. Rabbani to step aside March 21 in favour of a multi-party governing council that is open to all of the 10 separate factions in the protested civil war.

However, more fighting is expected and few believe that Mr. Rabbani will resign as planned, though his term in office expired in December.

The Taliban advanced several hundred kilometres in recent months from southern Afghanistan to the southern fringes of Kabul.

Made up mostly of militant young theology students, the group developed an aura of invincibility during its march towards the capital. But it has suffered setbacks in its first serious encounter with the president's forces.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Court denies Kuwaitis' asset plea

KUWAIT (R) — A British court has refused a request by two former Kuwaiti oil executives for the release of assets frozen in connection with their trial in the emirate on charges of embezzlement, lawyers said on Wednesday. The commercial court on Feb. 28 denied an application by Abdul Fatah Suleiman Khaleel Al Badr and Hassan Ali Hassan Qabazard that orders freezing bank accounts they hold in Britain be lifted, the lawyers said in interviews. The court in London in late July granted the orders, which freeze bank accounts pending trial, against two defendants alleged to have been involved in embezzling \$100 million from state-owned Kuwait Oil Tankers Company (KOTC). Mr. Badr is a former chairman of KOTC. Mr. Qabazard is a former deputy KOTC chairman for financial affairs. The orders were imposed at the request of KOTC's present management, which alleges the accounts contain money gained illegally from alleged embezzlement.

Trial in U.S. ambassador's slaying postponed

BEIRUT (AP) — The retrial of two suspects in the 1976 kidnapping and killing of the U.S. ambassador to Lebanon opened Wednesday but quickly adjourned after the defence requested more time. Bassam Mohammad Farhi and Naim Ahmad Kamal were brought to the appeals court Wednesday morning for what was supposed to be the first session of their retrial in the murder. Ten minutes into the session, the defence requested more time to examine the documents in the case. Presiding Judge Mouin Oseiran concurred, setting a new session for April 12. Farhi, Kamal and a third suspect — Toufic Mohammad Faroukh — had been tried in absentia and sentenced to life imprisonment May 5 in the kidnapping and murder of Ambassador Francis E. Meloy, his economic counselor Robert O. Waring and Lebanese driver Mohammad Moghrabi. After the sentencing last spring, Farhi turned up in jail, serving a sentence on drug conviction. Kamal surrendered to police. Both demanded a retrial. Faroukh remained at large.

Yemeni party expels 11 for 'treason'

SANAA (AFP) — Eleven members of the ruling General People's Congress (GPC) led by President Ali Abdullah Saleh have been kicked out of the party for "treason" in backing southern separatists in last year's civil war, a GPC official said Wednesday. A statement after an extraordinary meeting of the GPC politburo chaired by Mr. Saleh late Tuesday and members of the party "had failed in their duty and damaged the party, its principles and its national goals." It did not say how many members had been expelled or give their identities. But a GPC official, who asked to remain anonymous, told AFP that 11 had been dismissed for "joining the secessionists" and "treason." Among those expelled from the GPC were a former governor of Aden Mohammad Ali Ahmad and Suleiman Nasser Massud, a supporter of the ex-president of South Yemen, the official said. Meanwhile, the politburo also agreed to discuss measures to adopt a "rigorous austerity financial policy, cutting back on spending and fighting corruption" at its next party congress in May.

Lockerbie relatives seek EU probe

STRASBOURG (R) — Relatives of Britons killed in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Scotland asked the European Commission on Wednesday to investigate the disaster, especially the question of airport security. "Six years after the offence no one has been tried for the bombing," says a statement explaining a petition presented to the European Parliament by U.K. Families Flight 103, named after the London-to-New York flight. "Nor have reasons been given for the lapse of aviation security at London airport where the bomb was loaded onto the aeroplane in unaccompanied luggage transferred from the feeder flight from Frankfurt," it says. The petition, handed to British Labour Member of the Parliament David Martin, asks the European Union assembly to push the commission to make a statement about the bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed 259 passengers and 11 people on the ground.

Turkey warns Kurds against goading Iraq

ANKARA (R) — Turkey criticised an Iraqi Kurdish faction on Wednesday for goading Iraqi troops across a Western-protected safe haven and warned it against any moves to seize the Baghdad-held oil city of Kirkuk. "We have reports that local (Kurdish) forces in northern Iraq are opening harassing fire on Iraqi troops permanently positioned south of the 36th Parallel," foreign ministry spokesman Ferhat Ataman said. "We are also receiving reports that the local forces plan to start an assault on Kirkuk. I wish to stress that Turkey will in no way accept such a development that will harm Iraq's territorial integrity," Mr. Ataman said.

Women go before Tehran court in public

TEHRAN (AFP) — Three women went on trial before an Iranian revolutionary court here Wednesday facing a possible death sentence for murder and planning bomb attacks, in the first public trial of the kind. Batul Vafari, Farahnaz Anami and Maryam Chahbazpur stood accused of belonging to Iran's main opposition group, the Mujahadeen-e-Khalq, and the murder of a priest, Tedhis Mikhalian, and involvement in the killing of another, Mehdi Dibaj, in 1994. The Mujahadeen say the three are not its members.

3 killed in attack on Mogadishu prison

MOGADISHU (R) — At least three people including two women were killed when gunmen attacked an Islamic Sharia law court prison in northern Mogadishu, witnesses said on Wednesday. They said gunmen with a "technical" battlegroup mounted with a heavy machinegun attacked the prison at Harar Yale district on Tuesday demanding the release of a murderer sentenced to death. The head of the court militia and two women bystanders were killed in the clash. An estimated 16 people were wounded in the fighting with heavy machineguns and rocket-propelled grenades until the attackers were beaten back by prison militia guards.

COLUMBIA

New York Times issues 50,000th edition

NEW YORK (AFP) — New York Times publishing its 50,000th edition Tuesday, typical of the soberness of the only major newspaper in the United States with comics, there was no celebration. In a four-line statement put out by the New York Times Company, and signed only with the initials of publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Sulzberger promised: "I'll fax you another one when our 75,000th comes out." There was no planned at the newspaper itself, said spokesman E. Dickman. "This is not a 'celebration week' style," he added.

Married woman's lover burnt in fit of fiery passion

SHANGHAI (AFP) — A married woman in the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou set her lover ablaze in a fit of fiery passion after he refused to break off their relationship, the Xinmin Evening Post said. Thirty-year-old housewife Chen Shunxi, who was involved in an adulterous affair with a man named Wenfu, went berserk and doused her lover with petrol and set him ablaze after an argument on March 10 at home, the paper said. Mr. Shao suffered third-degree burns over 70 per cent of his body before being rescued by his neighbours. He was treated at Hangzhou Hospital's burn unit. Xinmin said Ms. Chen had alleged ways to end the affair but Mr. Shao refused and threatened to expose their relationship to his husband and six-year-old son, the paper said. Local officials have launched an investigation and Ms. Chen could be prosecuted, it added.

Plane loses wheel after landing

PALERMO, Sicily (AFP) — An Alitalia jetliner lost a wheel after landing at Palermo Airport but no one was hurt in the accident, airport officials announced. The plane, which came from Rome, lost the wheel for stopping at the end of the runway and tilted over but it was not damaged.

Congresswoman to have a baby

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Enid Greene Waldholtz expects to give birth in September, which would make her the second woman in history to have a baby while serving in the U.S. Congress. The freshman Republican from the western state of Utah said Monday she will stay on the job as long as possible and will turn after the event. "I'm healthy, normal pregnant and the doctor said I can continue," she said. Waldholtz and her husband plan to set up nurseries in Salt Lake City, Utah's capital, and in Washington. Her first birth in office was former Rep. Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, a California Democrat who served in the 1970s. Ms. Waldholtz, 36, said she learned she was pregnant with her first child in January, shortly after the office.

Che's diaries reveal wild motorcycle trip

NEW YORK (R) — Dr. a youthful, wild ride across South America on a motorcycle, revolutionary Guevara seduced the wild a good friend and was responsible for a house burn down, according to a recently-discovered diary. The Motorcycle Diaries, which go on sale in the United States and Britain in May, were kept secretly for years because "it doesn't reflect a very political correct Che" publisher Robinson told Publishers Weekly editor Mark O'Brien in this week's edition of the magazine. The diary, written by the Latin American revolutionary leader when he was 23, was originally published in Italy, where it sold more than 300,000 copies.